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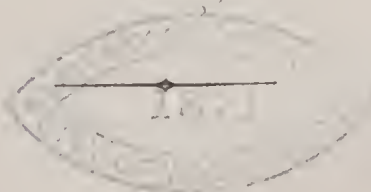
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AN INQUIRY
INTO THE
ECCLESIASTICAL CONSTITUTION,
THE
Origin and Character of the Church of Christ,
AND THE
GOSPEL MINISTRY.

IN FOUR PARTS.
BEING A COMPLETE REFUTATION OF ALL STRANGE NOTIONS AND
SECTARIAN HERESIES ON THE SUBJECT OF
THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY.

16
BY THE
REV. R. ABBEY.

EDITED BY THOMAS O. SUMMERS, D.D.



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TO THE
REV. CHARLES K. MARSHALL, A. M.

REV. AND DEAR BROTHER :

IT was in conversations with yourself that my mind was directed more particularly than it had been before to the kindred subjects of Church polity and ministerial authority.

The interest you have manifested in a few small works I have heretofore published on these subjects, together with my profound respect for your character, talents, piety, and usefulness as a minister, and our long and intimate friendship, makes it, in my judgment, exceedingly appropriate that I should offer this volume in dedication to you, as a token of my high regard and sincere affection.

Your friend and brother in the gospel of Christ,

R. ABBEY.

SEPTEMBER, 1856.

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Introduction.

THE Reformation of the sixteenth century was at one and the same time the result of a thousand conforming and interworking causes, and the special interference of God in his providence.

It requires but a slight acquaintance with Christianity on the one hand, and human nature on the other, and but a glance at their antagonism with each other, to enable any person to discover the powerful tendency in man to substitute forms, words, works, and actions, in the place of that simple trust in God and rectitude of life which are the conditions of salvation.

A religion of forms, rites, ceremonies, manipulations, and external observances, is very seductive, and of very corrupting tendency. Considering, then, the state of the world, in regard to government and popular intelligence, for many ages previous to the sixteenth century, it is not to be wondered at that religion should have lapsed into the condition of deep corruption, superstition, and ecclesiastical domination which we find almost universally to prevail at that period.

It is assumed, without argument, that Protestant Christianity is a mere return from these corruptions and superstitions to the simple religion of the Bible. But there was something else necessary besides a reformation. It was necessary that the Church should *keep* reformed.

Every thing we see of religion in the Bible and out of the Bible, admonishes us of this alarming tendency in man to substitute human actions, and human efforts, and human merits, in the place of that simple humiliation and reliance upon Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, which is divinely set forth as the only religious requirement. Man must do something himself to merit salvation. He must *do* something to cause it. This worldly religion is ever on the stretch to arrange the ecclesiastical system, as to its causes and effects, as to official order, authority, and procedure, so as to make it conform to *his* notions of what it ought to be.

This was the great incipient error of Romanism, which led to all her subsequent superstitions and corruptions. The Reformation corrected the then existing error as far as it could successfully reach it, but could not cure the tendency to its repetition. This can only be done by continual conformity to the Scriptures, with every rising and setting sun. The tendency continually exists as strong as ever.

When the claims of religion press themselves home upon a man's judgment and conscience, his first effort is to shield himself behind these legal defences; to plead their considerations in his behalf, and to show to the Almighty that he is about to set all matters right by a conformity to them. He is going to meet these claims in the very best way he can.

He is going to exercise, nay, he is now in the practical exercise, of *his* best judgment as to what religion ought to be. He is examining the relation which he thinks ought to subsist between a merciful God, willing to pardon, and a fallen man; and he is now going, on his part, to sustain that relation. He is ready openly to acknowledge that God is superior to himself, and is entirely willing, in this arrangement, to act the inferior. And now he is ready to go to work at religion.

His first effort is to seek a wonderfully *legal* Church; and then a superlatively *legal* ministry; and then a mass of uncommonly *legal* actions and forms, in the process of the worship which is to atone for his sins. When these considerations connect with what is called the *ordinances* of religion, the legality of authority and of modes is esteemed so highly, and is so imperiously necessary, as to render the legality of Christ's atonement quite a secondary matter. With him the kingdom of God comes especially and essentially with observation. He recognizes a priesthood and a temple service as clearly as did the Jews, though not precisely in the same form. He looks to the minister and the Church; and only to Jesus Christ through them, and by their authority and sanction.

Hence we have among us not only the Romanism of Rome, and Popery proper, but the incipient Romanism of Churchism and ecclesiastical exclusiveness.

These religious errors whittle down THE CHURCH to the smallest point of sectarian bigotry. In their arguments they set out with plausible hypotheses, and then, by a course of

superficial and inconclusive reasonings and special pleadings, they seem to make out their case to the satisfaction of all who were previously thoroughly determined to believe nothing on the subject involved, but these dogmas.

The recent argument of a somewhat celebrated apostate to Rome, ex-Bishop Ives, in the "Trials of a Mind," is held to be unanswerable. Grant his premise—*an ecclesiasticism*—a religion coming specifically and essentially through the Church and the ministry—and his conclusions cannot be avoided. No man can logically stay away from Rome proper. No secondary establishment will answer.

The reformation in England was to a considerable extent thorough and evangelical. It was also to a considerable extent merely legal and political. This latter party was anti-popish, but still, thoroughly Romish. And their principles were at length, in 1604, attired in the proper livery of Churchism, and brought forward and publicly and authoritatively exhibited upon the forum of England by Archbishop Laud, the greatest bigot and the greatest tyrant that ever annoyed and damaged the Anglican Church.

Before this time the principles of the Romish party in England were latent, but now they were brought boldly forward. They were opposed to Popery, that is, to the rule of the Pope as the head of the Church, and to many corruptions and practices that had incidentally got worked into the rites and performances of religion. But they were in favor of the doctrine that God deals not directly with men in conferring spiritual blessings, but that he places these blessings in the reach or keeping of *the Church*, or its *bishops*, and that the

people are to look to these vicegerents and get these blessings at their hands.

This is the essence, and the only essence, of Romanism, as contradistinguished from the Christianity of the Bible. The Bible says the people are to look directly to God in the person of Jesus Christ, for blessings. Romanism says, No: look to the priests, and let the priests look to God for you. The Bible says the minister of the gospel is but an ecclesiastical officer, a mere *minister*. Romanism says, No: he is the vicegerent or earthly agent of Christ. This is the fundamental error of Romanism. Other corruptions and debasing superstitions are merely the results of this, as its accidents or incidents.

These considerations—a mediatorial Church and priesthood—naturally lead men to a close examination of the *legal authority* of the ministry, and the *legal construction* of the Church; for their religion is based upon this legality. They are not in search of proper or legal authority to preach the gospel, for the purpose of calling sinners to repentance, and to the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ, but legal authority to administer the sacraments.

The Papist gets his Divine blessings second-hand from the priest, in the performance of the mass, the confessional, the wafer, the extreme unction, the bones of saints, etc., etc.; while the mere Romanist of modern type, the Puseyite, or High Churchman, gets his in the same way, by means of baptism, or baptism performed in some particular mode, immersion, for instance, or the eucharist, confirmation, crosses, etc.

It is all Romanism, whether it have a confessional, a mass, or an immaculate conception, or no.

These things naturally lead men to exclusiveness. The strict legality of this supposed agency, or vicegerency, is in itself naturally exclusive. It repudiates every thing that deviates a hair's-breadth from itself. And hence the absorbing idea of a Church of peculiar construction, exactly modelled, precisely adjusted, and framed after some supposed Divine form. And hence the supposed necessity of a *derived* authority in the ministry; and hence the apostolic succession, and the rest of the catalogue of Puseyitish novelties respecting the constitution of the Church of Christ, and the simple ministry of his gospel of salvation.

Again, these errors and these tendencies have caused good men to look too far and too radically in the other direction. The lack of necessity for a stringent episcopacy led men to embrace the doctrine of PARITY in the ministry. If they could dislodge the argument that nothing was ecclesiastically legal but episcopacy, they supposed they had of course established the doctrine that nothing was ecclesiastically legal but parity.

The errors growing out of an atoning Church and priesthood, with its high ORDER of ministry, which could stand between mundane Christianity and the blessings of God, could, in their estimation, be overthrown and exposed only by the stringent doctrine of legal parity.

The correction of these errors is the design of the following chapters in part. It is also attempted to straighten out the whole subject, and make it plain to the student of divinity

and to the common reader. The author has endeavored to look into the ecclesiastical constitution briefly, yet thoroughly and independently. He has pursued as plain and simple a course of reasoning as practicable, for the design is to make the work *useful*.

He has endeavored to follow after no uninspired man; though every effort has been made to render the labors of others available, as far as their views have corresponded to those of the author. The undertaking has been to begin at the beginning, and to pursue the subject in its own simple and straightforward channel.

There is a fault, the author conceives, with regard to many of the theological and ecclesiastical productions of the age we live in. In this respect, religious literature has not improved, but, on the contrary, has suffered great loss in the last century. He alludes to a want of *independence in thinking*. To depart, even in phraseology, from "standard writers," is a sin too great to be ventured upon. The standard writers have thought all there was to think, and have written all there was to write. And now, all we have to do is to rearrange, and put into different shapes and forms and compilations, the thinking and writing already done for us.

He confesses he is not strict to observe this law in all things. He doubts if the men who lived fifty or a hundred years ago *knew it all*; nor is it easy to conceive that the mere fact that they lived in those past periods, gave them any preternatural endowments. In fact, the notion is almost ventured upon, sometimes, that knowledge is, or ought to be, in some sense *progressive*. Or, in other words, that increased opportunities,

superior advantages, ought to advance, rather than retard, scientific or philosophic investigation.

Nor is it believed to be in the least derogatory to the memory of our fathers, or our contemporaries, to *extend* and *simplify* research into truth beyond the point where the labors of others were suspended.

That the great legacy which our fathers have left us is a store of thought and intellectual accumulation, all will allow; but, like other legacies, it may be added to without blame.

The celebrated English philanthropist, Mr. Smithson, looked to an "increase of knowledge."

No effort has been made to seek for error by travelling out of the regular course of the argument; but wherever errors have been met, they have been opened out to exposure plainly, fairly, independently.

Search has been made for the CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST, and for the MINISTRY OF HIS GOSPEL; and for the AGENCY they separately and conjointly perform, in the system of religion set forth in the New Testament.

And with an humble trust in the Founder of these things, it is confidently believed they are exhibited to the observation of plain, right-thinking, unprejudiced men, who prefer the prosperity of CHRISTIANITY to the elevation of a party.

Preface.

THE constitution of a Church is its body of *principles*. These are of course found in the Bible; for a Church is a Church of Christ. Men have no more right to form or constitute a Church than to prescribe religion. Religion is of God; and the Church is an instrument in the hands of Providence for the promotion and extension of religion.

But while the *constitution* of a Church is found exclusively in the Bible, it does by no means follow that the Bible also contains the municipal laws which sustain and carry into effect such constitutional principles.

There is a wide difference between a *constitution* and *laws*. The one is the general fundamental law, or the code of *principles* which must be observed in the making of the more immediate rules of conduct. The laws, as thus contradistinguished, are the more immediate, local, temporary, municipal rules which direct *how*, in each particular, these constitutional provisions shall be observed and followed.

God made the one, and left man to make the other.

In the civil and political world around us, a state or nation has for its government, first, a constitution, either written or understood. This is the supreme mandate, and fixes the principles of the government, which are never in the least degree to be infringed. Then the separate states, or counties, or municipalities, acting under and in obedience to this potent grant, make such more temporary and immediate laws as will agree with their several conditions and circumstances, and at the same time observe and carry out these fundamental regulations.

And hence in our own country nothing is more common than to see different States, cities, towns, and counties making different laws, each one looking to its immediate peculiarities and circumstances. But at the same time each law *grows out of* and observes and sustains the common constitution.

This is the philosophic and *natural* relation between a constitution and its subordinate laws.

We see the principle, too, quite as plainly in the natural world around us.

Nature has established, for instance, an *agricultural constitution*, the separate provisions of which can never be violated without certain and immediate damage. But this constitution does not, in the very nature of the case could not, prescribe precisely when, where, and how the clearing of ground, planting, ploughing, hoeing, and harvesting must be done. And yet every particular instance of all this is done, if done without loss and damage, in obedience to and in conformity with these fundamental provisions.

Just so of the Church. Yes, and of religion, too; and

of every system among men which is a combined system of theory and practice.

The following treatise is an attempt to set forth, in a clear and practical point of light, the constitution and the laws of the Church of Christ, or to separate clearly between the two in the practical, every-day workings of the system.

The author is reluctant to express his belief, though he feels constrained to do so, that heretofore this matter has not been carefully looked into. It has rather, in his view, been looked *at*.

That the libraries all contain very able and very valuable treatises upon Church government, is well known to everybody; and that far greater ability is found displayed in these books than need be looked for in the present volume, the author is perfectly well aware; and yet it may be true that some very valuable primary thoughts and considerations may have failed to strike the mind of previous writers which the author may have accidentally stumbled upon.

After having carefully examined his essay, however, the author has the satisfaction to find that, in his judgment, he has not in any particular come in conflict with any writings that are considered to be of a standard character in the Church of which he is a member, though he ought to say plainly to the reader, because it is true, that he has not tried in the least degree to conform his views to those of any writer or any class of writers.

That the work in its present form is rough and imperfect, is readily admitted. In fact, it is very seriously doubted whether a work of this sort could be prepared in any tolerable

degree of finish or correctness, until the book be first printed, and afterwards subjected to a second course of reflection, examination, and revision.

The author makes his most humble obeisance to the Church, and leaves his Inquiry in the keeping of his brethren.

R. A.

THE
ECCLESIASTICAL CONSTITUTION.

PART ONE.

The Primitive Church.

CHAPTER I.

A CHURCH.

THE term *Church* is popularly used in several different senses: that is, to mean several different things. It is important, then, if we would have our language understood, to know precisely what we mean when the term is used.

In the Scriptures the term "Church" is sometimes used to denote the entire body of professing Christians on earth, or the entire body of true and faithful believers. "Upon this rock I will build my Church," Matt. xvi. 18; "And the Lord added to the Church daily," etc., Acts ii. 47; "Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ," Eph. iii. 21. See also Heb. xii. 23, Eph. iii. 10, Col. i. 24, and a few other places.

The term is also used in the Scriptures to denote a particular congregation of people who reside at or near the same

place, and who meet statedly at the same place for the purpose of worshipping God according to the commandment of Christ. "And when they were come, and had gathered the Church together," etc., Acts xiv. 27; "As I teach everywhere in every Church," 1 Cor. iv. 17; "If, therefore, the whole Church be come together into one place," 1 Cor. xiv. 23; "And when he had landed at Cesarea, and gone up and saluted the Church," Acts xviii. 22; "Likewise greet the Church that is in their house." Rom. xvi. 5. See also 1 Cor. xviii. 17: Acts ii. 47; xi. 26; xiv. 23; xv. 22; and perhaps some other places.

These are the only two senses in which the visible Church is spoken of in the New Testament.

The term is never used in the Scriptures as in these days, to denote a denomination or sect of Christians composed of several congregations, as the "Methodist Church," the "Presbyterian Church," the "Protestant Episcopal Church," etc.

The word Church is sometimes used in respect of the blessed who are in heaven, and sometimes in regard to the doctrines or belief of Christians. But these are foreign to the purpose now in hand.

Lord High Chancellor King, of England, who has examined into this and kindred questions with a minuteness and care almost unexampled in the labors of the learned, informs us (*Prim. Ch.*, p. 21) that in all the writings of the Fathers for three hundred years from the apostolic age, he can find but one instance in which several churches or distinct congregations are spoken of in the singular number as a Church. Cyprian, he says, once, and only once, uses the term in this sense, where he speaks of "the Church of God in Africa and Numidia;" and here the term is not used in the modern sense of a denomination of Christians. The writer speaks geographically, and evidently means that portion of the

Christian Church which exists in those countries. So that it may be safely affirmed that neither in the Scriptures, nor in ecclesiastical writings in early times, is the term *Church* ever used as we now use it, to denote a denomination or sect of Christians. It is invariably used, as above explained, to mean either the entire body of believers, or a single congregation. When two or more of these congregations are spoken of, they are called so many churches.

It is also, perhaps, true, that in one or two places in 1 Corinthians the *place of meeting* is spoken of as a church. This, however, is quite unimportant in the present discussion. It is sufficient for us here to know that in the New Testament invariably, and in the writings of Christians for three or four hundred years afterwards, at least, a single congregation of Christians was known as *a Church of Christ*; and that two or more such congregations were reckoned and spoken of as so many separate and distinct churches: though no doubt sometimes several congregations in the same city were spoken of as a Church.

In process of time, however, the external ecclesiastical *form* of Christianity, as we shall have occasion to notice as we pass on, underwent considerable change. These single separate Churches became united in a kind of federate alliance; and hence the several Churches thus united under the same general jurisdiction, would naturally take the general name of *a Church*, rather than several Churches.

We hear the Scriptures speak of the Church of Antioch, the Church of Rome, the Church of Corinth, of Ephesus, etc., etc., and we understand the meaning as above described. But at a later period, when we hear those Churches spoken of, we understand the expression very differently—we understand all those Churches—in process of years they were more or less numerous—which were in confederation with, and under the general jurisdiction of those central or parent Churches.

It is not at all important here that we stop to make any inquiry into the occasion, from time to time, of this federation of Churches. The fact is sufficient for us to know. We might remark, however, that federation in the first place came about almost of itself, without any preconcerted plan, or law, or arrangement for its accomplishment. Considerations of safety, and protection against popular and political aggression and persecution, and disturbance from a lawless rabble, first brought the thing partially about. And it afterwards became more complete in this way: Churches were first planted in the chief cities, towns, and commercial centres; and when the number of the disciples at any one of these churches became too great, and their several places of residence too distant for convenient worship in one place, other churches would be organized, and surround the parent Church as her offspring. The maternal relation between the central and the surrounding churches would be much more strong and powerful in those days than at present, from the consideration that in those early times almost all political, legal, religious, and social influence centred and resided in these central towns and cities.

The Churches which we find to have existed in the days of the apostles are, for that reason, to be regarded as true, valid, Christian Churches. What their essential ingredients or constituents were; or, in other words, how far a religious organization may vary from this precise model, and still be a valid Christian Church; or, still further, whether the apostolic Churches presented any precise uniform model—whether it was always the same, or different in different times and places—are considerations we will endeavor to inquire into in the further prosecution of this subject.

But the question now is, What are we to understand by a valid Christian Church in these days?

We ought to decide this question now, precisely in the

way it would have been decided in the days of the apostles. The great distinguishing feature among men, in respect to religion, as looked at by the apostles and their fellow-Christians, was this: believers in Christ, on the one hand, and all the world beside on the other. Christians—believers in Christ as a personal Saviour—whomsoever and wheresoever they might be, were of *their* party; all others were opposed to them. Christian men and women were part and parcel of “*the Church*,” as spoken of in Acts ii. 47: Eph. iii. 21, etc., etc., as above quoted. They were part and parcel of the body of Christ.

Now, what was the name and character, as held and spoken of in those days, of a number of such persons, associated together for worship, and meeting together to worship at stated periods, according to their faith in Christ and the teachings of the apostles as they understood those teachings? Were they not invariably regarded and spoken of by inspired men as *a Church*? They were, beyond all question. The idea of an association of *Christians* not being truly and properly a Church, without inquiring any further than the fact that they were Christians, and statedly met for public worship, for preaching and hearing the word, and for the solemnization of the sacraments, was never dreamed of by any man in apostolic times. The slightest intimation of such an idea, directly or indirectly, is not in the Scriptures. I do not know that an *attempt* to prove this fact from the Scriptures was ever made by any man.

Then a Church is an association of Christians. The term Church means a little more than the mere plural of Christian. It means Christians in association as such. And this supposes that they meet together for worship, for mutual edification, for the preaching of the word, and for the proper administration of the sacraments.

A Church, then, is a specific association of Christians. When the apostles and early Christians said *Church*, they meant Christians; not in a separate and individual or several character, but in a congregational, or united, or aggregate capacity. Church means Christians in association. If they be Christians in an associate capacity as Christians, then they meet together statedly for worship, the preaching and the sacraments being parts of the worship.

What their particular *form of government* may have been is another question, which cannot materially affect this. If their rules of government be such as to create a disability on their part to worship God in the way prescribed, then they are not Christians. But if they be Christians, then they *do* govern themselves in that way in which, in their judgment, they will be best enabled to carry out Christ's instructions in regard to religion and worship.

There are two hypotheses, and but two, with regard to the test by which a valid Christian Church is pretended to be determined. First, the Scriptures; and secondly, the personal descent of ministerial authority. The latter mode requires that the validity of a Church be tested by the validity of its ministers; that is, by the validity of their orders. Without stopping here to argue this point, which will come up more properly in another part of the discussion, it may suffice perhaps to suggest that the validity of a ministry and that of a Church are not precisely one and the same thing. Christian ministers are not Christian Churches. The laity are not members of the ministers, but the ministers are themselves but members and officers of the Churches.

The former mode of testing a Church, by the Scriptures, requires that we place the association directly alongside of the straight edge of inspiration. If it fits, then it is a Church. If it does not, then it is not. This mode of testing a Church does not require an inquiry into the former *history*

of the organization; into the opinions or character of some man or men who once belonged to it. It does not inquire what the character of the association in its aggregate capacity was at some former period, fifty, a hundred, or a thousand years ago. It makes the inquiry *now*, and applies the rule to-day.

When we come to identify and speak specifically of a scriptural Christian Church, we must designate the thing which the Scriptures designate as a Church, viz., a single congregation. What then comes of the question, supposing it to be raised, whether the Methodist Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church, or any other federate Church, is, or is not, a scriptural Church? The Scriptures know of no such Church. A federate Church was not known in those days. The apostles never saw or heard of one.

Whether all the separate Churches which compose the confederacy are scriptural Christian Churches is another question. They may or they may not be, according as each one may or may not be found to conform to the Scripture model. Ninety-nine may be scriptural, and the hundredth may be spurious. A federate Church, however, is commonly reckoned to be apostolic, if its articles of religion follow the Scripture teachings, and its terms of confederation do not violate them. And then the separate Churches themselves are apostolic or otherwise, in so far as they do or do not conform practically to these rules.

The view here taken of separate scriptural Churches and of confederate Churches, may be objected to by some, or in the estimation of some it may be refuted. In either case I am perfectly content. I have only to fall back upon the Scriptures, and be consoled with the knowledge that they share with me in the same objections and refutation. We are looking at a *Church* as the apostles looked at a "Church."

The question, however, of the legality, propriety, or expe-

diency of confederations of Churches, such as we now have in most of our ecclesiastical organizations, in the progress of Christianity subsequent to the days of the apostles, is quite a different thing from the fact we have been noticing. That much good has resulted therefrom cannot probably be questioned. That there is any thing in the Scriptures, general or particular, which discountenances or discourages the system of federation among Churches, cannot for a moment be pretended. On the contrary, the New Testament gives encouragement to the idea. In truth we have, in the inspired history of the early Church, the incipient stages of confederation. It was not reduced, it was not attempted to be reduced, to a system. It came about naturally and spontaneously, as a mere incidental result of surrounding circumstances. True and proper federation, however, was neither necessary nor useful in the then condition of the Church, it all being under the general supervision of the apostles.

Ecclesiastical confederation is the opposite of stringent or absolute congregationalism; but is not inconsistent with the more moderate and rational congregationalism which we find to have existed, to some considerable extent, in the apostolic Church. Modern congregationalism, especially among some of the Baptist Churches, far overshoots its own target. It discovers that some of the apostolic Churches carried on their government pretty much in themselves, without in all things recognizing the necessity of a federative jurisdiction; and they then run headlong to the extreme of perfect congregational independency, excluding absolutely all coöperation or interference on the part of other sister Churches or congregations; thereby establishing, in that single congregation, a complete and independent system of Christianity.

This state of things was not only never practiced or thought of in the days of the apostles, but it has in itself nothing conducive to religious growth and prosperity. It has not

worked well in practice, as compared with a moderate system of ecclesiastical confederation.

The inquiry respecting *an apostolic Church* is oftentimes made, it is feared, without a proper understanding of the import of the question. The greatest sticklers for conformity to the apostolic Church, if they adhere closely to their own principles, will find themselves unable to discover such conformity now on the face of the earth. They lose sight of a general conformity to apostolic principles, in the all-absorbing idea of a mere similarity in a few external practices which were merely incidental. This point, however, will be looked into more fully in a subsequent chapter.

Here we have, for instance, a hundred or a thousand separate churches leagued together under the same general government. Now, it cannot be said that that confederacy is an apostolic Church, in the sense of an external conformity to the outward *form* of the early Church, in every particular; because the apostles knew of no such organized confederacy. But if we look for a more rational conformity in respect to *religious principle*, as believed and practiced by both, most probably we will be able to see it with all conceivable plainness.

Still, when we look at a confederation, we cannot say that *it* is an apostolic Church. The several churches composing the confederacy may or may not be. That ninety-nine are apostolic, or scriptural, does not prove that the hundredth is not spurious. The organic confederacy, like many ecclesiastical institutions—such as missions, itinerancy, annual conventions, and the like—is only an incidental arrangement of the churches, which might or might not have been adopted. It certainly does not destroy the proper identity of the several churches composing it. Confederacy of several churches does not make a Church; for if so, then the apostles never saw a Church, for they never saw a strict confederacy of churches. The *confederacy* is not *a Church*, in the apostolic sense. In

modern parlance we call it a Church, which is all very right, of course. A word is the representation or signification of an idea. But when we use the word *church* in the strict apostolic sense—that is, to mean what the apostles meant when they said *church*—we cannot call a thousand churches *a Church*, any more properly because they are leagued together in confederacy, than because we find them in a state of disintegration. Confederation does not make a Church. It is an incidental arrangement which churches sometimes enter into for their supposed mutual benefit; and if, on the one hand, it does not make a Church, on the other, it does not change or destroy the character which the several churches had, respectively, before.

It is quite immaterial, also, to this argument, what may have been the occasion of such ecclesiastical confederation as we see now, or as we have seen in any former history of the Church. For the most part, in this day, they grow out of differences of opinion respecting prominent religious questions. Sometimes they have sprung from geographical or political considerations. All this is quite immaterial.

Then, if this argument cannot be moved from the plain, simple basis upon which it rests, what comes of all the arguments of the high-churchman, going to prove that his “CHURCH,” meaning thereby his confederacy of churches, is strictly, in all things, an apostolic Church? The shining of the sun is not more certain than that neither the apostles, nor any man who lived within several hundred years of their time, ever saw such a human association. They tell us that their Church—their confederacy—is apostolic in the sense that its external organization—its form—its official features—conform to the apostolic model. And to refute a thousand such arguments, made no matter how, we have only to remind them that not only did the apostles never see such a “Church,” but they tell us repeatedly and plainly that what they call a *Church*

is a single congregation. Two congregations are two churches; four are four: a hundred are a hundred. Before any man can begin properly to argue that a confederate Church, regarded as a confederacy, is an apostolic Church, he must point out the chapter and verse in the New Testament where the word *church* means a confederacy of churches.

This argument of course applies to all confederate Churches. The Methodist Church, for instance, is not apostolic because of her confederate character; but because, and only because, of her conformity, in *faith* and *practice*, to the RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES which the apostles held and taught.

This is the test, and the only test of A CHURCH.

CHAPTER II.

A VIEW OF THE CHURCH TAKEN FROM THINGS EXCLUDED
FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

THE preaching and teachings of Christ were made to and in the presence of Jews almost, if not quite, exclusively. These Jews were not only Jews in a national point of view, but also in a strict ecclesiastical sense. He was laying down the teachings of truth not only for those persons to whom he spake, but for all men in all time. If he did not *speake* to us, he provided suitable means for the communication of his words to us. He did not speak all his words of teaching directly. In regard to many of the things, he instructed his apostles, and they spoke and wrote them. And these words are all communicated to us in the same way, viz., in the Bible.

Now, in these Bible teachings three things are to be carefully noted: First, the things which are prescribed as necessary to be done; second, the things which are prohibited; and, third, things which are omitted to be spoken of at all. It is feared that this last point is either not noticed or very slightly passed over by many Bible readers. If so, it is to their disadvantage.

There are many things which must have transpired in the early Church, and which must have been regarded as of considerable importance, and which are entirely omitted in the sacred writings. We cannot consider that these omissions

were merely incidental or accidental, or that those things were left out of the sacred record merely because of their non-importance. They must have been purposely omitted. The question is not whether they were important *to them*, the people of that day ; but the question which no doubt determined their insertion or non-insertion was, whether they were of importance *to us*, the people of after time. And not, either, whether we would deem them important, but whether, in the Divine judgment, we needed such instructions to enable us to carry on our religious or ecclesiastical affairs.

We find in the Bible nothing like an outline of elementary instructions, in catechetical or other form, as used in the inculcation of Christian faith upon catechumens. Something of this sort must have been used constantly in those times, but we have no mention of it. We have no form of prayer, except the Lord's Prayer, which is rather an embodiment of the *things* to be prayed for.

We have nothing as to the form of public worship. The Bible contains no ritual, or liturgy. We are not informed how public worship was commenced and carried through, or whether a particular form was always observed by the apostles, or under their general or special direction. We do not know *how* the Lord's Supper was administered ; what kind or quantity of bread, or wine, was used ; and many other such like things. Neither have we any thing like a rubric or set of canons.

We are informed that baptism was the initiatory rite by which the disciples were distinguished from other persons ; but all that we know as to how baptism was performed, or *what it was*, is that they were baptized "with water : " how much or how little water, or how it was applied, we are not informed.

In regard to the ministers, we are informed that God calls men to preach ; but in what particular way they become the

ministers of certain particular Churches, we are not informed. They are initiated into the ministry by *the laying on of hands*; but we have no instructions as to how this ceremony is performed.

We learn that the Church of Christ was divided into several or many local Churches: that each Church had a government and exercised discipline; that the ministers received men into their Churches, and excluded the vicious therefrom; but what was their discipline, whether all the Churches had the same, what officers each separate Church had, or whether they had all the same, and what were precisely, or even generally, the powers of these officers respectively, we have no certain inspired information.

And not only have we, on these subjects, and many others that might be named, no inspired information, but such was the overruling providence of God—which is still more remarkable—in relation to these matters, that we have, on most of these points, no sort of historic information; and on none of them have we any that is even historically reliable.

This, humanly speaking, is remarkable indeed. It is remarkable that these things do not come to us in the Bible; and it is still more remarkable that they have not been handed down outside of the Bible. Books were not then written as plenteously as they are now, but they were written, many of them, especially histories. We have histories in some abundance of these times, containing much information of what was passing. They come to us, and are now familiar in every library, as well authenticated as is the history of our American Revolution, which is but a step behind us.

And since we are here, let this idea be varied a little in a very important interrogative.

Why is it?—who has not asked himself the question a thousand times?—*why is it* that profane historians have given us so little with regard to historic Christianity in apostolic times?

If we will but pause, and look carefully into this matter, it will appear sufficiently plain. There is a reason for all this.

In the first place, we are obliged to conclude that the reason why these things—those at least which are above enumerated—are not set forth in the Bible, is that they were purposely withheld by Divine inspiration and interference. And the reason for the withholding appears to be this :

They are, in the very nature of the case, such things as do not require always to be performed in the same way. The *mode* of their performance is a mere incident, and does not, and cannot, seriously affect the *thing* itself. Many circumstances respecting local condition, civil or political, or accidents or situations in which men might be placed, differences of sentiment which might preöccupy men's minds, and a hundred such things, might call for or lead to their performance in different ways. But if the mode had been laid down in Scripture, it would most surely have been regarded, in many instances at least, as a Divinely prescribed mode, and its uniform performance in that particular way, or attempts to do so, would oftentimes greatly impede the progress of practical Christianity.

To confine acts of Christian worship to some particular *mode* would be unphilosophical and preposterous. And to require ecclesiastical things to be done in some prescribed mode would be equally unmeaning. There can be no essential virtue in a *mode*. A *mode* is not a *thing*; and it is rank nonsense to say that essential virtue can attach to any thing that is not a *thing*.

What does God require of man? *To do modes?* The idea is no idea at all. The notion is nonsense. God requires men to do *things*; and to abstain from doing *things*, and things only. He requires them to believe *things*—true things, and nothing else. Modes, in the very nature of the case,

refer to and are governed by taste and circumstances. They are not subjects of control and regulation by essential virtue. Modes are essentially matters of taste and prudence, to be regulated by circumstances, as they incidentally arise. A lame man may walk to church, but he does so in a very different mode from other men. No two men walk in precisely the same mode. Preachers are required to preach, and to preach certain things; but certainly they are not required to preach in any prescribed mode; for if so, then not more than one man preaches right, for no two men preach in the same mode precisely.

It is utterly unphilosophic—nay, it is preposterous, to suppose that God prescribes and fixes a mere *mode*. The idea of attaching essential virtue to a mere mode, is the very essence of superstition. Here is the mark of vital distinction between worship and superstition.

The idea of attaching essential virtue to modes of administering the ordinances of baptism or the Lord's Supper: to the particular kinds of worship to be performed, or to the government of churches, arises from very superficial thinking: inclines the mind towards superstition and bigotry, and leads it to shadows rather than substances.

Still, notwithstanding these plain philosophic considerations, the world is now, and has ever been, and will most likely continue to be, until the dawn at least of millennial illumination, pretty much in the condition in which Paul found Athens—"too superstitious." And hence, if the modes of doing things—of administering the sacraments, performing acts of worship, attaching ministers to particular churches, arranging the government of churches, administering the government of churches, and the like—had been noted, men would have given them undue importance, and there would have been a continual strain amongst thousands and millions to conform to what they would consider a Divine mode.

Hence these things are purposely and wisely excluded. And hence, too, the overruling providence of God remarkably controlled this matter, in regard even to uninspired historians. For such is the idolatrous and superstitious tendency of the world, even of Christians themselves, too often, that authentic historic accounts of these things would also have been pernicious.

The world is left, therefore, in regard to these things, and the Church placed, in a condition where true wisdom and sound discretion would direct.

The teachings of God's word, then, in regard to these modes, manners, ways, of doing things, is, that the things are to be done; but the mode may change with times, ages, places, circumstances, as sound judgment and pious intention may dictate.

Thus it is that we gather lessons of incalculable importance by carefully considering particular things which are *not* in the Scriptures, as well as from things which *are*.

CHAPTER III.

ECCLESIASTICAL ORGANISM.

THE Christian religion and the Christian Church are very different and distinct things. Religion is the faith which Christian men have. A Church is an association of Christian people.

A *community*, or *association*, or *society*, necessarily implies the idea of order, organization, officers, and laws; and, consequently, of government. These laws must recognize the *members* of the community, and distinguish them from other persons who are not members.

Religion was undeniably designed to be social. It is, in its very nature, of a social character and tendency. The Lord not only promised to be with and in his true disciples, personally; he also promised to be with "two or three" who were "met together" in his name.

It was evidently not the design of Jesus Christ, in introducing Christianity into the world, that it should be a mere system of truths, to be believed by, and of conduct to be enjoined upon, individual persons, like philosophy or morals; in regard to which each person acts independently by and for himself. But the design was to keep up a social community, or society, of such believers, who should be distinguished, as such, from the rest of mankind, and occupy among their fellow-men the conspicuous position of a *Church of Christ* upon earth.

It seems essential to a Christian society, or association—as to any other society or association—that it have laws or by-laws, either independent, or subordinate to a supreme law or constitution, which shall enjoin and prohibit certain things, and prescribe some kind of penalties in case of their infraction.

But the existence or foundation of a society, or community, or association of men—either of Christians as such, or of any other class or description of men, as such—does not necessarily imply that upon their associating or communing with each other, in any given character or capacity, they must institute or organize a *new* government, not known to the individual persons before, or under which they had not been associated before, in some character differing from that of their present association.

Let me illustrate: For a society of Christians, acting under a set of laws and with a set of officers, adapted to their condition, duties, and purposes as Christians, to form themselves into a company of navigators, or agriculturalists, would seem to imply the necessity of making some very new and different laws from those they had before. For the laws which would regulate and keep them together in a wholesome manner *as Christians*, would not be at all likely to give them many very important directions about sailing over the seas, or of planting and harvesting.

But for the same society of Christians, acting under the same laws, and with the same kind of officers, to modify their *religion* materially and become Universalists, for instance, does not, in the same manner, necessarily require the making of a *new* set of laws; for the laws and the kind of officers under which they were associated as Christians, would perhaps answer very well for them as Universalists. I mean, of course, their laws respecting their external *association*, and not those respecting their *religion*. Might not a company of Christians and a company of Universalists have the same kind

of municipal laws, and pretty much the same kind of municipal officers?

Or suppose in some particular state or country, the people, living in an isolated condition, profess some particular religion, in the observance and daily practice of which they are very strict and uniform; say it is Universalism, or Judaism. One or two Christian missionaries go among them and preach, and teach that their *religious faith* is erroneous—that Christianity, faith in Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour, is the only true religion—and they make some converts. The Christian preachers do not discover any thing materially wrong in the *form of government*—the ecclesiastical government, which they find in use among these religionists: they meet for worship every Sabbath day, have orderly preaching, and are quite sufficiently formal in their modes of worship. They regularly receive men into, and exclude them from, their communion, making moral conduct and faith in their religious tenets the tests of membership. Upon the whole, considering the peculiar local, civil, and political condition of these people, their habits, customs, character, etc., they see nothing wrong, very materially wrong—in their *form* of ecclesiastical government; though in other circumstances, perhaps, it might be considerably improved.

Now, what would these Christian ministers do with these people *in regard to their form of Church government merely*? Would a wise and prudent forecast dictate that they should do any thing, materially changing their *form* of Church government? Would they not rather say to themselves, “Their form of Church government is not materially objectionable as it is. They have about the right number and kind of officers to govern their several assemblies or Churches: their officers are brought into office in a very proper way: the general administration of their ecclesiastical matters is not objectionable: their laws are wholesome,

and would not, perhaps, be bettered by being changed: we will not interfere at all in these things, but let matters proceed in the usual way, so far as our converts are concerned. We will explain to the converts the necessity of observing baptism and the Lord's Supper, and let their form of government alone."

Would any thing be more natural or more prudent than such a course as this?

But let us vary the case a little.

Suppose that these ministers, who thus teach Christianity among these people, had never themselves heard or known of a *Christian Church*. The thing is altogether supposable. They are themselves only two of the same people; have, with their fellows around them, been all along of the same religion as the rest; have participated every day from boyhood with their countrymen in the Church government to which they are all accustomed, and have with them believed in the same religion, Judaism or Universalism, or whatever false religion we may suppose it to be. But they have recently been taught the true Christian faith, by direct and immediate miraculous revelation from God. And in pursuance of the direct and immediate commands of God, they set about preaching and teaching the Christian faith, having renounced their Universalism, and exhort others to do so likewise.

I ask, Is there not now far less probability than in the former case, that they will do or teach any thing about *Church government* with the view of annulling the then existing government, and of instituting a *new* government? Can a reason be conceived why they should attempt to do so? Is there a motive that would point to such a course? Would any thing be gained to *religion* thereby? or would converts to the true faith be more likely to come in, when, in addition to changing their religious belief, they are also required to renounce their form of government, which is confessedly

unobjectionable, and in which they and their fathers have lived, and, as they think, prospered so long? *Why* would they seek to change the mere *form* of Church government?

Let the reader note these things, and pass on.

I do not know that there was ever any difference of belief among Christians as to whether Jesus Christ was truly and properly the Author and Founder of the Christian *Church* as well as the Christian *religion*. This is never objected to; and it is as readily assented to on all hands, except perhaps in Romanism and high Puseyism, that Christ is still the proper Head of the Church, without any vicegerent on earth. This, however, is in regard to the authorship, the founding and the headship of the Church.

But the original *organization* of the Church is a somewhat different thing. What do we mean by the organization of the Church in the first instance? Is there any difference between the organization of the *Church*, and the organization of the *government* of the Church? Do we not mean the organization of the government of the Church, when we speak of the organization of the Church? And what is meant by organizing a Church government, or any other government? It is the arranging and prescribing its form of government: that it shall have such and such laws of external association, that there shall be such and such officers, with such and such powers, and such and such shall be the conditions of membership in the government; and these conditions shall be inquired into so and so. Can any thing less than all this be regarded as the *organization* of any government? Are not these prescriptions, and nothing less than all these prescriptions, *the acts* which make up the organizing? Can the idea of *organizing a government* be whittled down below this?

Now, how can it be said, from reading the Scriptures, that Jesus Christ *organized* a Church government, by those who

at the same time admit that the Scriptures contain no form of Church government? They of course cannot mean what they say.

Jesus Christ did not *organize* a Church government; that is to say, he did not prescribe that Christians—either those then with him in Palestine or elsewhere, or Christians in all after time—should have a government with precisely such and such officers, with these and those powers, and with these and those laws. He did not *organize* the Christian Church.

The Saviour taught his followers and disciples, so far as we are informed, one thing, and one only: viz., RELIGION. He said nothing to them particularly on the subject of Church government, either directly or through his apostles. We are told once or twice, in a very general and incidental manner—or rather, reference is made to the fact, existent or in prospect—that the Church was to be well ordered, well officered, well governed; but his teachings were exclusively on the subjects of religion and ethics.

We may expect to see the simple philosophy and reasonableness of this course, when we come to examine more particularly into the manner in which the Christian Church actually came into an organic form; and we must not fail to remember that in all these examinations the Scriptures alone are our guide.

We will refer briefly to such few passages of the New Testament as are by some supposed to point to the organization of the Church; though really it can scarcely be said that the New Testament is relied upon by any in support of the hypothesis in question. The conclusion seems to be picked up without a thought. Men seem to think that because Jesus Christ is the Founder of the Christian religion, and that he prescribed the *principles* of Church government in the sense in which he expresses himself, that he therefore of course organized Christians into an external association.

Matt. xvi. 18: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The Romanists contend that in this passage the term *this rock* means Peter, and therefore Peter is the rightful head of the Church; and, supposing this to be the correct reading, it only says that in some way Peter is to be the foundation of the Church. But Peter is dead long since: nothing is said about the *organization* of the Church. We are not told what sort of government or what officers it is to have. Peter may, in some way, be the foundation of the Church, and yet it may be organized in any one of a hundred different ways; that is, it may have any one of a hundred different kinds of government.

But biblical Christendom has generally connected the words *this rock*, in the above passage, with the great declaration which Peter had that instant made, and to which the Lord was replying. The Lord asked the disciples collectively—"But whom say ye that I am?" and Peter answered, on behalf of himself and fellow-disciples, "THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD."

Here seems to be a rational foundation, or "*rock*," on which to found a great principle of faith for mankind. It is the one only pillar on which the Christian religion rests. But it tells us nothing whatever about the organization of a Church into a government. It tells us nothing whatever as to what particular officers the Church is to have, what are to be their functions, or any thing relative to its form of government. Christ may be the Son of the living God, and this great truth may be properly called a "*ROCK*" upon which the Church shall rest for ever; and yet the Church may have any conceivable form of government—any one of a hundred different forms—that will comport with good order and natural harmony.

We are inquiring now, not into the principles of the Church—what is to be its faith—whether Christ or Peter is to be its head; but we are inquiring respecting the external organization of living Christians into a Church or Churches, with a particular form of government; and how the Church came to have the particular kinds of government which it has.

Acts xv. 6: “The apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.” Ver. 23: “They wrote letters by them after this manner: The apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.” Chapter xx. 28: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Eph. iv. 11: “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Some other such passages might be quoted, but they say not one word on the subject of the organization of the Church—what form of government it is to have. On this point the Bible is *silent*.

CHAPTER IV.

ECCLESIASTICAL ORGANISM CONTINUED.

A LATE writer, in attempting to prove that *his* form of Church government is the only proper and scriptural form, remarks as follows :

“The origin of the Church (meaning its external organization) dates from the commencement of Christ’s public ministry. This is proved by the early institution and administration of Christian baptism.”

He then goes on to quote from John iii. 22 : “After these things, Jesus came with his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he abode with them, and baptized.” “The followers of Christ are here spoken of,” he says, “as his disciples. They are also spoken of as a society by themselves. There he abode with his disciples, not with others. The title of disciples marks their acknowledgment of him as their master and teacher, and their submission to his authority.”

This reasoning is defective from the consideration that baptism distinguishes men only as the *disciples of Christ* ; whereas, otherwise, they are not so disciplined, or do not so discipline themselves. Baptism is by no means identical with an outward external association in Church membership. It is the initiatory *rite* by which men go into the Church, or in virtue of which they acquire an external associate membership with others in the Church. But still, men do not go into

this external association of men, simply *because* of their baptism, as a mere historic fact; for we know that many persons who are baptized are not entitled to Church membership, and cannot and do not obtain it here amongst us every day. Baptism lays the man who receives it under a solemn covenant with Christ; but other men are not bound by his pledges—Christ is not bound by his pledges. If baptism were identical with Church membership, then a baptized person could never be excluded from the Church. This idea is the foundation-error that gives rise and support to the heresy of baptismal regeneration.

The same writer above quoted—Sawyer on “Organic Christianity”—says on the next page, 19 :

“It appears, therefore, that our Lord gained numerous followers in the early part of his ministry, and that he organized them into a religious society, acknowledging himself as its head, and had them baptized.”

It is very true that he gained numerous followers in the early part of his ministry; but there is no proof whatever, in the Bible or out of it, that he “organized them into a religious society,” separate and apart, and distinguished from the “religious society” of which both he and they were already all members. No one can conceive of the slightest necessity for his doing so. But, on the contrary, such a course would have tended greatly to frustrate his whole scheme.

Both he and his disciples, and those Jews who were not his disciples, were already regular members of an existing Church. Now, for him to have organized, alongside of this, and in opposition to it, another and different association, would imply two things: first, that the first was defective, and, secondly, that sound policy at that time dictated an open and formal opposition to it in this way.

On the contrary, we expect to see, as we pass on, that

Christ discovered no such objections to the then existing outward organization of Church members as in his judgment called for an outward and formal opposition to it at that period.

Again, it is supposed by some that the form for Church government is set forth in Matt. xviii. 15-17: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

"This," it is said, "so far as discipline is concerned, is the government of the people by the people. The congregation is the Church court, to which difficulties among the membership are to be brought; and not the Church court only, but the *supreme Church court*, for the final decision of cases."

That "the Church" is to decide, primarily and finally, all cases to be decided, nobody disputes. But this does not say how the Church will proceed in such adjudication. It may proceed in any given way in which a government, a congregation, or a people may perform judicial and executive acts. It no more follows that "the *congregation* is the Church court," than that one man, by direction of the congregation, is to be the "Church court."

The only essential difference between a mob and a regularly ordered government is this: the former act in mass, all being precisely equal, so that there is no subordination or insubordination, and the latter assigns the specific duties of legislation, judicature, and executive, which three things make up the entire function of government, to certain officers, as specific separate functions or duties. For these duties to be common

among the whole membership of the government, destroys the very idea or character of a government, and reduces the whole membership thereof to a mob.

We conclude, further, that Jesus Christ did not organize Christians into a Church government, from the considerations, first, that he never in his whole life intimated, so far as we know, that there was any thing in the least degree objectionable in the then existing Church government among the Jews. And, secondly, *that he himself lived and died a regular member of the then existing ecclesiastical organization.*

He was born in the Jewish Church, of Jewish parents. At the eighth day of his life he was solemnly and regularly initiated into the Church personally, as a member thereof. At his thirtieth year—the legal age according to the rules of the Church—he was, in the usual way, regularly inducted into its ministry, and became a preacher in the Jewish Church. He thus officiated in its ministry three years, when he was charged with dereliction and heresy; and for this alleged crime he was crucified. He strictly conformed to the government of the Church during his whole life; and if the above declaration, that he never intimated that there was any thing wrong, any thing that required reform in the mode of government of the then existing Church, be affirmed to be erroneous, it is for those who allege the error to point it out.

So far as we know, he was as well content with the form of government which he found and which he left in the Jewish Church, as he was with their dress, or civil jurisprudence, or any other custom prevailing among them.

The idea that he set up an ecclesiastical government in opposition to or different from the Church polity of the day, is erroneous, is utterly without foundation in Bible history, or any other history, and is equally so in the genius, and spirit, and principles of the Christian religion.

Mr. Horne, in commenting on Luke iv. 16–22, remarks :

“From this passage we learn that when Jesus Christ came to Nazareth, his own city, he was called out as a member of that synagogue to read,” etc. (Introduction, vol. ii., p. 106.)

Just so. He was *a member of the synagogue*, in the town where he lived. In the above passage it is said that *his custom* was to go into the synagogue to read and preach on the Sabbath day. Nothing is more familiar in the life of Jesus Christ than this, that he habitually and regularly taught in the Jewish synagogues. And when we come to speak more particularly of the synagogue-worship, we shall see that he not only taught *in* their synagogues, but that he performed his regular worship there, and filled a regular office in the services of the Sabbath, conforming to all the rules thereof as he found them established. He did not seek to alter them.

And if Christians were not organized into a separate ecclesiastical polity or Church by Jesus Christ, neither was it done, as a specific measure, by the apostles.

It has already been shown that the term *Church* is sometimes used in the Scriptures, and is yet, to denote the entire mass of believers on earth. This is of course irrespective and totally exclusive of the idea of *organization*. That sense of the term does not refer to or denote Christians *organized* into societies, or compact together in any way. It refers to true believers wherever found, in or out of any communions—in or out of Christendom. In this sense *the Church* may, with great propriety, be spoken of from the time the first disciples followed Jesus, to the present. And it is in this sense, let it be particularly remarked, that the term is used when we say that Christ is its Founder or Head.

Now, on the ascension of the Saviour, the Church could only be spoken of as actually existing, in this sense. It existed in this way: The eleven disciples or apostles *believed* the important truths which their Master taught them. They

were associated together upon terms of perfect equality, determined to carry out his commands, and to go and preach the doctrines he taught them, and the truth of his resurrection. There were a few other persons, and, so far as we know, but a few, who believed the truth as taught by Jesus, and there were still others somewhat favorably inclined towards these doctrines. Several women also deeply sympathized in the late astounding tragedy, and felt warmly attached to these interests.

But we must remember that all these persons, Christ and all, were Jews—regular members of the Church. All these things took place *in* the Jewish Church. The three years' preaching of Christ—the complaints of him—the trial—the crucifixion—all took place in the then existing Church, among the regular members thereof.

But neither the teaching nor preaching of Christ, nor any thing in any way connected therewith, had any relation to the *polity* of the Church. Nothing of *this* sort was discussed. Nobody was dissatisfied with the government of the Church, much less with its *form*. Considerations respecting the form of their Church government, or even the manner of its administration, were as foreign to these innovations and difficulties as were those respecting the geography of the land they lived in.

The apostles were on an equality among themselves, and therefore they did not compose an organized society. For, if organized into a society, different positions would be assigned respectively to different persons; for this is what we mean by a society being organized, in contradistinction to a state of disintegration.

The apostles immediately set about preaching the gospel, not for the formation of Churches, for this is not the gospel, but for the propagation of the *religious faith* they had imbibed. They were already formed into Churches. They

were all of them already members of the Church, preachers and people.

It is not pretended but that the Saviour did distinctly recognize the prospective fact that Christians would not only be distinguished as such, but that they would be organized into societies, separate and distinct from the then existing Church, and exercise ecclesiastical discipline among themselves for their advantage and protection. This is clearly seen in the disciplinary power recognized in the Church in Matt. xviii. 17: "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church." This separate jurisdiction was a thing to be naturally looked for. In the nature of the case, it could scarcely be prevented. All that I say is, that neither the Saviour nor his apostles did, at any time, set about and organize a Christian Church, different from, distinct from, and in opposition to, the then existing Church of the Jews. The Church did not originate in such a way.

It is said that if Christ and his apostles, one or both of them, founded a Church, in the sense of an external compact, society, or company of Christians, it must have had rules, regulations, officers, and such other characteristics as naturally pertain to a society; and the administration of these rules must have been exclusively in the hands of the disciples, and not in any sense in the hands of Jews.

All of which is very true.

For the disciples, or converted Jews, to keep along in ecclesiastical practice and polity, in the same course they had pursued before they became disciples, does not by any means involve the necessity, or in the slightest measure suppose, that Jews who were not converted must participate in the government of their Churches. Two Churches may now have the same form of government without any such interference.

There cannot be a Church without laws, officers, and government. This is very true. Yet many persons fail to notice

that these *laws, officers, and government*, do not apply to the Christian Church in general, but to each separate Church in particular. When were there any such officers, out of Romish or other High Church superstitions, other than the apostles? When were there laws, or a government, of the Church, generally? These things belong not to the Church of Christ generally, but to the separate Churches particularly and specifically.

Organization, therefore, which is but another name for laws, officers, and government, set a moving in proper order, pertains not to the Church of Christ in general, but to each of the particular Churches respectively considered.

The early Christians, in carrying on their ecclesiastical government—the same government, that is, the same *form* of government, they had before they became Christians—were by no means precluded from introducing new rules and regulations, from time to time, as their wants and peculiar necessities demanded. The introducing of new rules occasionally, or frequently, is not by any means *the organization of a new government*. Do not all governments annul old rules and enact new ones at pleasure? In this respect, the early Churches, no doubt, did as the later ones uniformly do.

The only religion known in Palestine before Christ began to teach was Judaism; and the only form of Church government was that of the synagogue. After Christ began to teach, and after the disciples rallied subsequent to his resurrection, a sect of Jews were found in the Church who believed that *Jesus was the Christ*, the Son of the living God. They believed the truths he taught, and that he rose from the dead. The bonds which bound them together, and which distinguished them from other Jews who did not thus believe, were naturally those of religious love and affection, and the warm feelings of faith inspired by their hope in Christ. The num-

ber of believers in the new religion increased rapidly, as the apostles preached, and as the other disciples prayed, exhorted, and lived holy.

Now, the question is, How did these Christians pass from a state of individual singleness and independence into a state of organized societies or Churches? The Saviour had given them no instructions on the subject, so far as we know, nor is there any *natural* affinity between religion and such organizations.

Experience teaches us that Church organization and discipline are greatly subsidiary to religion, though they no more form a part of it than do houses to preach in, or printed Bibles to read. The religion which Christ taught, however, was a general guide to men in all the affairs of life; but it no more pointed out to them the particular things to be done in or under a system of polity which would relate to them in their personal association as Christians, than that which would relate to them as men of science, as mechanics, or as citizens of a state. For a Christian is a Christian irrespective of the mere government of his Church.

Government, no matter to what particular state or condition of men it may relate, is a thing as essentially different from *religion* as from science or industry.

The Jewish Church polity was connected somewhat with the civil government under which they lived. Those Christians, as well as their fellow-Jews, were under the Roman government, and from it they could, as Christians, hope for no more protection or aid than from the Jews, who were not Christians.

Superficial thinkers might suppose that, under these circumstances, it would be necessary for wise heads to get together and plan and frame out a system of government suited to their condition; and that the plan should in some way

become established among them as a fixed and settled system of ecclesiastical government. But to this there appear several objections :

1st. It would have been regarded as insubordinate to the Roman government, and in conflict therewith. The Jews were in colonial vassalage to the Romans. The Romans, however, permitted them to enjoy their own religion, and keep up their own rites of worship and Church discipline. But every thing must be done under the strict eye and supervision of Roman officers. Their public worship could not be conducted among themselves exclusively; it required the presence of a civil officer.

“For the maintenance of good order, there were in every synagogue certain OFFICERS, whose business it was to see that all duties of religion were decently performed therein.” *Horne’s Introduction*, vol. ii., p. 104.

The Romans were exceedingly jealous of the power of the Jews, and kept a strict eye over all their public and private actions. The King of the Jews, in securing to them this religious privilege, of course acted under the strict authority of the emperor and senate, and permitted them to go not an inch farther than his instructions allowed.

Now, suppose a new sect of the Jews, which the followers of Christ really were, had set up a new ecclesiastical organization, distinct and different from the Jewish Church polity; the one was authorized, or at least, legally and authoritatively suffered, by the Roman government; and the other unauthorized, and therefore strictly inhibited. The inevitable consequence would have been to arouse the sleepless jealousy of the Roman government, and the new Church organization would have been crushed in a moment. This difficulty was great enough as it was, when the believers in Christ merely asserted a *religious faith* different from that which prevailed generally among Jews. But to have set up a rival

Church organization, unknown to and unauthorized by either Jewish or Roman authority, in a country and time when Church government and civil government were always connected with each other, would have been madness and folly in the extreme.

One of the chief reasons, no doubt, if not the only reason, why the Saviour was so silent and cautious in asserting his supreme Divine headship over the Church, was, that he might not arouse the political vigilance and fears of the Romans. So he carefully avoided an open, and bold, and outspoken assertion of these truths. He said enough to give his immediate followers distinctly to understand the truth; but he said it privately, and enjoined privacy on those to whom he spoke, lest an incautious proclamation of the truth would call down the vengeance of a powerful opponent upon his defenceless followers.

2d. Another reason why the followers of the Saviour could not set up a distinct ecclesiastical organization, which was to be a model for Church government among Christians in all future time, was, that they could not possibly know that the best form of Church government for them, in the peculiar circumstances which then surrounded them, would also be the most expedient for Christians in all the future ages of the world, and in all the possible circumstances in which mankind might be found in all time to come. This consideration will be spread out more amply before the reader at a more appropriate time in a future chapter.

3d. Such a course of proceeding was by no means necessary, or useful, or called for, by the circumstances they were in. To show necessity for a *change* in ecclesiastical polity, implies the necessity of showing that the existing polity is unhealthful to religious growth and extension. It must be asked, then, Was the existing Church government of the Jews a bad one? Was it inconsistent with true Christianity?

Was it disadvantageous to the spread of true religion? To assert that it was, involves the necessity of pointing out, in the New Testament Scriptures, the place where such a statement or intimation is made. And therefore, it is unhesitatingly asserted, it requires that which is impossible. The truth is, that the form of Church government and synagogue-worship which prevailed among the Jews in Palestine, in the time of Christ, was not in that age radically changed. Nor has it been, in truth, materially altered to this day. The great business of the apostles was to propagate the *true faith*. The matter of Church government, what form it should have, seems not to have entered into their minds, as a matter of primary importance.

When or where did they do or say or teach any thing in favor of any one particular form of Church government, in contradistinction to any other particular form?

It must be remembered that mere *form*, abstractly considered, bears the same relation to government as to any thing else. A *form* is not a *thing*. A little paint, or a piece of stone, or wood, may represent the *form* of a man, as well as living flesh, and bones, and muscles. A fool may have as good a *form* as a philosopher. At the same time, however, you cannot have a good man, or a good machine, or a good government, without having, at least, a tolerably suitable form.

CHAPTER V.

ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

It must be understood that Christ not only directed those persons with whom he conversed to be religious, and to trust in him as their Saviour, but he directed that there should be a perpetual and successive religion in all time to come, and among all people. And hence, his directions were that the most vigorous efforts should always be made, by all Christian people, to extend this religion, and urge and push it forward, amidst no matter what difficulties and discouragements; and that the best means should always be adopted for the most speedy and successful prosecution of the enterprise.

Now, it is a fundamental principle in government, that a grant or investiture of authority to do any particular thing, implies, also, power to do all such intermediate things as may be antecedently or incidentally necessary to the proper doing or successful prosecution of the thing empowered or directed to be done. It was, therefore, clearly implied, if not expressed, that Christians, in prosecuting the business of religion, were to form themselves into Churches, or separate associations, larger or smaller, with these, those, or the other regulations; and to do all other things that might be necessary, from time to time, which would be best calculated to promote a healthy extension of religion. Then, although religion might be prosecuted and extended without Churches, discipline, or ecclesiastical law, yet that would be, evidently, a very

slow, uncertain, and inconvenient mode of spreading religion throughout and over the world.

And hence, what do we find the facts to be as to the course pursued by the early disciples in their affiliation and public religious course? Why, they did *such things*, from time to time, as appeared clearly and naturally useful or necessary for both the general and particular interests of the cause they were engaged in. Very few of the great religious movements of Christendom, from first to last, were specifically directed. Christ did not direct that his sayings, and teachings, and history, with the other inspired writings, should be gathered together, and bound in one book; and yet this became obviously necessary or useful, and therefore the disciples did it. He did not direct that it should be printed and circulated over the world; and yet this was done, because it became apparently necessary. He did not direct that religion should be taught by the writing and circulation of books; yet this has, in like manner, been done. He did not, perhaps, direct that the apostles should write letters of instruction and encouragement to different Churches, or that they should do many other particular things which common sense and common circumstances from time to time directed and called for.

It was enough for him to direct that the Christian faith should be propagated, extended, taught, made universal. He directed that persons who were counted or recognized among believers, and who should be guilty of and persist in sin, should no longer be so counted or reckoned. But he did not direct particularly that courts of judicature should be instituted to inquire into and determine upon such facts, and execute such decisions. This, however, was done, because it became necessary, in order to arrive at the end to which his general instructions looked. He did not direct that such believers as lived in a particular town or neighborhood should be specially associated together in compact with special persons

to exercise control in that particular association, over and above the common association which he directed should subsist among all Christians. And yet this was always done, because the better prosecution of the grand design rendered it obviously necessary or expedient. He did not direct that those whom he charged with the ministry of the gospel should exercise control and authority among Christians where they lived and statedly ministered, beyond that degree of control which seems rationally to pertain to pastoral care and oversight. But, inasmuch as it became expedient and proper, in the opinion of the wisest and best Christians, that such persons should be invested with such authority rather than other persons, to such an extent as was deemed best, it was accordingly done. He did not direct that some particular duties belonging to the ministry of the gospel should be performed by certain ministers, and that certain other duties should be assigned to certain other ministers. Yet, in the prosecution of the work, this division of labor became expedient, in the belief of the wisest and best men, and therefore it was done. He did not direct that some ministers should superintend and oversee the labor and ministry of others; and yet, in the progress of the practical labors of Christianity, this is sometimes, if indeed not, in some way, always, to some extent, deemed necessary or useful, and hence is done.

Thus we see that what we call *Churches*—Christians *organized into societies*, and hence Church government—are features in the practical working of Christianity which have grown out of expediency, or the apparent or supposed necessity of the case. They are not *religion*: they are not *Christianity*: they are only instruments or means of the better and more successful extension of Christianity over the world.

When the apostles began to preach, converts gathered around them. The cohesive influence of love to Christ and to each other, brought them into the most intimate associa-

tion. The dangers and persecutions to which they were exposed, cemented them still closer. Public worship—the assembling themselves together once a week, viz., on Sunday—was no new thing to them. They had been accustomed to it all their lives. The only change with them was, that now they *believed in Christ*. Their pursuit was *religion*—the inculcating and enjoyment of the truths which they had learned from Christ. But as to the external mode and form by which they would cohere and unite in public association, no special arrangements were made about that; and they naturally fell into, or, rather, kept along in, their accustomed mode of synagogue-worship. But little change was found necessary to be made; and, in fact, but little was made, except the introduction of the Lord's Supper, which was celebrated at each weekly meeting.

The disciples continued to increase, and all continued their public worship as before. In what sense, then, can it be said that a *new Church* was, at this time, organized? The only thing new was a new *faith*, and new *moral practices*. There was nothing new, nothing needed to be made new, in outward forms of worship or polity. Those who believed in Christ not only worshipped after their accustomed forms of synagogue-worship, but they oftentimes, whenever they could do so, worshipped *in* the synagogue, with other Jews. Sometimes all the members of a particular synagogue, or a majority of them, would become converted to a belief in Christ; and the worship, as to its *form*, would continue pretty much as before. The only material change known to have taken place, was the celebration of the Lord's Supper and Baptism.

It must be remembered that the Romans cared not a whit about the religious worship or faith of the Jews. They permitted them to worship as they chose. All they cared about was, that in their public assemblies they should do nothing detrimental to their government; but whether they believed

in Moses, or Christ, or both, or neither, was matter of perfect indifference to them. They required one or more of their own officers to be present at the meetings, to enforce civil subordination. Beyond this, they cared nothing. The part which Roman officers acted in the trials of Christ and his followers, was not because their alleged heresies violated any laws of theirs, for they had no laws on such subjects; but because they had undertaken, by previous stipulation, to assist the Jews in carrying out and enforcing their laws.

The synagogue-worship, or form of service, consisted of three things: first, prayer; second, reading the Scriptures; third, preaching, or expounding the Scriptures. What need was there for a change?

Let it also be remembered that "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." Acts. xi. 26. Now Antioch was a Gentile city, and it was here that the first Gentile Church was established. (Watson's Dictionary, p. 730.) In the Acts of the Apostles, chapter xi., from the 19th to the 26th verses inclusive, we learn that upon the death of Stephen, and the persecution which followed, some of the disciples travelled as far as Antioch, and preached the gospel with great effect. When these things were known at Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas there, to assist and encourage the young converts. After remaining there a time, he went to Tarsus to seek Saul, and they both preached the gospel in that city with great success. This was the occasion of the name "CHRISTIANS" being first applied to the disciples of Christ. This, according to Watson's Theological Dictionary, page 730, was *thirteen years* after the Christian religion began to be preached by the apostles.

Now, in these thirteen years, what were the disciples "called?" If they had, before this time, organized themselves into an ecclesiastical government, alongside of, and distinct from, and in opposition to the only ecclesiastical government

then known in the world—viz., that of the Jews—it is very pertinent and very important to inquire, What was that ecclesiastical government called? To say that it was not known by any particular name—that it was not distinguished from other associations or other people—is equivalent to saying that it did not exist; for the idea of a public government, embracing many thousands of persons, in a country where public assemblies and organizations attracted the attention they did there in the Roman government, which had nothing, not even a name to designate or distinguish it, cannot be tolerated a moment.

Dr. Adam Clarke tells us very satisfactorily what the disciples or followers of Christ were *called* before they took the name of Christians at Antioch. In his comment on Acts xi. 26, the passage now before us, he says:

“Before this time the Jewish converts were simply called among themselves *disciples*; i. e., scholars; *believers*, *saints*, *the Church*, or *assembly*; and by their enemies, *Nazarenes*, *Galileans*, the *men of this way*, or *sect*; and perhaps other names which are not come down to us.”

These facts are utterly incompatible with the idea that, from the first, they were *organized* into a separate and distinct ecclesiastical government, with positive laws, and positive discipline, and an independent jurisdiction.

Not the slightest intimation is made, however, that even at Antioch the disciples were organized into a separate ecclesiastical government, the forms of which differed from the Jewish polity. It is only stated that then and there they first took the general name of Christians. Whether this name was given them by others, or they assumed it themselves, the learned are not agreed, nor is it important to our present argument.

If, on examination, it shall be found that the apostles themselves were, and continued to be, regular members of the

Jewish Church, what will come of the idea that they organized, and set up alongside of the Jewish Church, a different and rival institution, with a reformed government?

It will not be doubted for a moment that the apostles, as well as their Divine Master, were, at the first, members of the Jewish Church. Did they ever formally leave that Church, by voluntary withdrawal or otherwise? The supposition that such an important occurrence as this took place in the lives of the apostles, requires, at least, some specific and well-authenticated proof. Is there in the New Testament the slightest intimation, directly or indirectly, or in any way, favoring such a fact? Did they discontinue their regular attendance upon the synagogue-worship, as had been their custom all their lives? Did they neglect or discontinue the accustomed temple services? or those of the regular feasts? Or what did they do, or omit to do, which indicated a personal severance from the Jewish Church?

Can these questions be answered?

On the contrary, it is susceptible of very clear proof, that, for at least ten or twelve years after the death of Christ, and when Christianity had become considerably extended in the world, the apostles, or some of them, still recognized their membership in the Jewish Church.

The worship of the synagogue will be briefly inquired into in a future chapter; but it may be proper here just to remark, that it was very strict, precise, and formal. It required certain officers to occupy each one his precise position, and to discharge his own precise duties. The synagogue was formally opened at the appointed hour on every Sabbath day, and the services formally opened by the proper officer, and as formally concluded and closed. Of course none but a recognized member of the Jewish Church could hold an ecclesiastical office therein, or discharge any of these official duties. It has already been said that these services consisted, first, in prayer;

second, reading the Scriptures ; and third, preaching, or expounding the word so read.

Now, is not the fact familiar to all Bible readers, that the apostles did frequently, nay, customarily, worship in the synagogue, and discharge the regular duties pertaining to one of these offices ?

Acts xiii. 14, 15 : “But when they [Paul and Barnabas] departed from Perga, they came to Antioch, in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.”

There could be no public speaking in the synagogue until the ruler or rulers gave permission, which permission was regularly communicated to those who were recognized as holding the office of minister or public speaker, and who filled that chair or office for that day. Though sometimes other persons of note and learning, accustomed to public speaking, were invited by the ruler to address the people. See Horne’s Introduction, vol. ii., pp. 104, 105, 106.

Acts xvii. 2 : “And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging,” etc.

Acts xviii. 4 : “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.”

Almost this same remark is made of Christ in Luke iv. 16 : “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up ; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.”

Acts xix. 8 : “And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.”

The same thing is mentioned in chapter xviii. 19, and else-

where. It is unnecessary to multiply quotations. These things show conclusively that St. Paul was recognized, both by himself and others, as an officer in the Jewish Church.

Acts iii. 1 : "Now, Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour."

What took them into the temple to pray at the ninth hour, or any other hour, but a conformity to the regular custom of their Church? If they had had no connection with the Jewish Church, they would have cared as little about praying in the temple at the ninth hour as at any other particular place or any other particular hour.

Acts ix. 26 : "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem."

Paul had now been preaching the gospel three years. See Watson's Dictionary, p. 730. The apostles themselves knew nothing of him, except as a bold persecutor of Christians several years ago. "*They were all afraid of him,*" until Barnabas assured them of his conversion, and of his bold preaching in the name of Jesus.

Can any thing more palpably than this contradict the idea that Paul had all this while been leagued with the apostles and others in mutual membership in an external association? Barnabas did not tell them that Paul was a member of their Church, but that he had been *converted*, and *boldly preached in the name of Christ*.

Paul, in his apostolical journeyings westward, failed not, when it was possible to do so, to return annually to Jerusalem, to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. When at Ephesus, seve-

ral hundred miles from Jerusalem, his brethren desired him to remain longer. "But he bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem; but I will return unto you, if God will." Acts xviii. 21.

And in Acts xx. 16: "For he hasted, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." Mark the earnestness of the apostle, and the imperativeness of his language: "*I must by all means keep this feast that cometh at Jerusalem.*" "*For he hasted, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.*"

Was this labor, eight hundred or a thousand miles travel, and anxiety to attend the great annual feast of the Jews at Jerusalem, performed in virtue of his membership in the Jewish Church, or as a member of a new, and different, and opposing Church organization? Did the rules of the Christian Church, as contradistinguished from the Jewish, require this annual attendance upon the feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem?

Paul also distinctly claimed not only that he was a Jew, but that he was a "Pharisee." Acts xxiii. 6.

The disciples were, from the first, in the habit of worshipping in their respective synagogues. This is seen from the remark of Paul in Acts xxii. 19: "And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee."

This argument might be pursued much farther, and many other proofs might be brought from the sacred record. It seems conclusive, however, that, whatever was the *religious faith* of the disciples, and whatever relation they may have sustained among themselves, or to unbelieving Jews, they did not at an early period dis sever themselves from an external membership in the Jewish Church, and organize themselves into a new, different, and opposing Church government.

Let us pursue the investigation patiently and carefully.

CHAPTER VI.

ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, CONTINUED.

LET us now inquire, very briefly, into the character of the Jewish synagogue, and notice the forms of public service observed therein.

The synagogue form of worship among the Jews had been in vogue since the captivity, about six hundred years. It sprang up incidentally, out of circumstances connected with their captive condition, and by degrees grew into the condition we find it in, in the time of Christ. It was the universal form of regular ordinary Jewish worship. Not less than four hundred and sixty Jewish synagogues were at this time in Jerusalem. (Watson's Theological Dictionary, p. 884.) Wherever there were Jews, there was a synagogue.

The first officer of the synagogue was the RULER. There was one or more to each synagogue. It was in this officer that the civil or political functions of government resided. It was his duty to see that every thing was done in order, that the laws of the Romans respecting public assemblies were carefully observed, and to try and punish petty crimes and offences. He does not appear to have been an ecclesiastic in any sense, but rather an officer of police, or of the state. It is contended by some that *all* the officers of the synagogue were elected by its members. This was no doubt the case with regard to all the other officers, the religious officers, and it may have been the case with the ruler. They may

have had some choice in his selection, but he was the representative of the government, and in that capacity watched over the movements of the assembly. Nothing was done without his permission.

The second officer of the synagogue was called the ANGEL, or messenger. It was his duty to open the services by offering up public prayers, according to the prescribed forms.

And the third officer was called the MINISTER, or servant. It was his duty to keep charge of the sacred books, to hand them out to the angel in time of service, etc.

There were also some other minor officers; but these appear not always to have been the same, and were probably different in different times and places.

The services of the synagogue were of three parts: First, *prayers*, of which there were several to be offered up. Second, *reading the Scriptures*: there were three lessons assigned to each Sabbath in the year, to be read regularly. Third, *preaching*: this service was usually performed by the angel—an officer answering to our minister, or preacher—as the first sacred officer. Though if any other person, belonging to any other synagogue, and holding the same office there, chanced to be present, and who was in the habit of performing such services, and recognized as a public teacher, permission would be procured from the ruler for him to preach, or the ruler would invite him to do so. The services generally closed with preaching.

These were the general features of the synagogue. Learned writers seem to differ, however, in regard to several matters of minor importance. The probability is, that these minor details differed at different times and in different places.

It must be remembered, also, that the Jews, in their religion, were cut up into sects and parties; and that deep corruption and superstition pervaded the Church.

Now, with this kind of religious service the apostles and

disciples, and all other Jews, were perfectly familiar, and had been all their lives; for they had participated in it every Sabbath day since the dawn of their earliest recollection. It was their *religion*; and religion, such as it was, was with the Jew every thing.

Here is where we first find the apostles and other disciples. It was in this state of things that Christ began to teach and to preach in their synagogues. And what was there remarkable now? Nothing whatever, except that in his *preaching*, in the regular course of the services, as above set forth, he preached *some things*, he advanced some sentiments, in his discourse, differing from what they had heard the Sabbath before. But the government of the Church was no more affected thereby than would be that of one of our churches now, by the preaching of some new and strange doctrine by some celebrated divine. The things which Jesus Christ taught and preached were remarkable, and attracted attention; but nothing else was remarkable, nothing else was touched.

The Saviour regularly filled the office of ANGEL of the synagogue, when he preached in a synagogue—the highest ecclesiastical office—and regularly, in the usual way, conferred with the ruler and the minister, as above explained.

Now, let it be repeated, for the truth is important, that in his teachings delivered to his apostles, *he never intimated one word*, so far as we know or have the slightest reason to believe, that there was any thing respecting either the *form* of synagogue-worship or of synagogue government that needed modification or change.

And further still, there was nothing wrong in the *religious sentiments* of the Jews, except in so far as they rejected him as their Saviour, and in things which naturally resulted from such rejection. And we may go still farther, and say that, to this day, this is the only objection to be urged against the

Jews. The Jews, as far as they go, are correct in their religion.

But now the grand question comes up: How did the Christian Church, as contradistinguished from the synagogue government and worship, come into being? Our worship is not indiscriminate with that of the Jews, nor has it been since the days of the apostles. When and where and by whom *was* the Church organized? it may be asked.

In the first place, it must be remembered, that there never was, from the birth of Christ to the present time, a set of rules and regulations forming an ecclesiastical code or discipline, setting forth in detail a form of Church government, which could be rightfully claimed as the exclusive discipline or external frame of "the Christian Church." There was never such an instrument of writing, nor was there ever such a *thing*, set forth authoritatively, by oral instruction.

There is a sense, however, in which we may speak of "the Christian Church," meaning its external framework, discipline, and form of government, in contradistinction to the Jewish Church. The *religion* of Christians differs so materially from that of the Jews; the line of demarcation is so distinct, broad and visible, both in an internal and external sense, that there could scarcely fail to be seen a general and marked difference in their forms of government and discipline respectively. And this general difference has ever been, and is now, clearly observable.

Still, "the Christian Church" never had a discipline. Each separate or individual church must necessarily have a discipline, written or unwritten; or a hundred, or a thousand churches may federate under the same discipline.

In the days of the apostles, the Christian churches, or communities, either did or they did not federate; or there was or was not a partial or sectional federation; or, as new churches were formed by apostles and others, as they travelled

and preached, they either were or they were not all placed under the same discipline. So that when we speak of the discipline, or form of government, of the Christian Church in the days of the apostles, we must either concede that they acted under a uniform discipline—that they were all exactly alike—either by a universal federation all over the world, or by a fixed and unalterable discipline being placed over them by their respective founders—each one exactly like all the rest—or we must speak of the discipline and government of the churches severally and respectively.

“The Christian Church” was not one thing, at one time and one place, that may be looked at and spoken of distinctively, so as to be spoken of as having *a* discipline, *a* government, unless we conclude that all the several communities had precisely the same government and discipline. And this cannot possibly be admitted.

The question, then, is not, “How did the Christian Church come into being?”—meaning, of course, its external government and discipline; but it is, “How did the Christian churches, or that general class of churches, come into being?” This question is capable of being answered.

And the question must receive the same general answer as would be given to one respecting the rise of any other Church or ecclesiastical system. How did the Jewish synagogue system come into being? When and by whom was it framed and established? It was never done at all at any one time, and by any one movement.

When and where was the Roman Catholic Church established? No such event ever took place at any one time. The Greek Church—the Lutheran Church—the Church of England—the Scottish Presbyterian Church—these are all organized Churches, with their respective characteristics and peculiarities; but can any man point out the time and place when and where each one was organized—precisely where it was

established—or exactly how or by whom it was established? Surely not. They grew up gradually by little and little, and became formed out of a thousand confluent but incidental circumstances.

How came the Jewish synagogue system into being? This was the way of it. When the Jews were carried captive to Babylon, they were deprived of the privilege of their regular temple service. Many of them were desirous of keeping up their worship as well as they could, and resorted to persons of noted and distinguished piety, as they performed religious rites for their respective families, and instructed them in religion. These meetings, in process of time, grew into a regular system. Houses for their accommodation were erected, one thing after another was engrafted, one rule after another was adopted, until we find the synagogue system in full and regular operation.

When, where, and by whom, was the Romish Church organized, as it has existed for many centuries? A glance at its history will show any one that it was six hundred years, at least, in the course of gradual conformation, before it attained to the characteristics which would entitle it to be considered *the same* establishment we see now.

And was the Greek Church *organized* at any one time? Its organization or establishment is well known to have been the result of metropolitan wars, and difficulties, and contentions, running through a long course of years and modifications, which require a volume to enumerate and explain. It grew up from a beginning which no man can even define or put his finger upon, and came into being without even a preconcerted intention on the part of any one to found such an establishment.

The Church of England is also without a datable origin. It is easy enough to look at it now, with its liturgies, its prayers, its sacraments, and its ceremonies. But who can

trace *the organization* to its precise commencement? There was a time when the Romish Church was the only Church in England, Italy, Germany, and elsewhere. The Reformation in Germany and Switzerland had spread a spirit of reform, in some degree, throughout Europe. And about this time, it chanced that a certain king of England got tired of his wife, and wished to marry another woman; and the pope was afraid to divorce him, for fear of creating a political difficulty in another quarter. Some shrewd friends of the king devised a plan for a divorce without the authority of the pope; and this made it necessary for England to declare her ecclesiastical independence of the Church of Rome; and so Henry came out "Head of the Church,"—a separate Church in England. The religious feature of the Reformation was then picked up as a matter of convenience by the government, and was seized hold of as a matter of pious principle by many individuals. The Church then reeled and tottered through the reign of several successive kings and queens—at one time Protestant, and again Romish—until at length the corruptions of Rome became measurably subdued, and the result of the whole, interlarding with many other local and incidental circumstances, was the institution now known as the Church of England.

Is there a Church in existence—was there ever one, except the theocracy under Moses and his successors—that did not come into being in this gradual, almost imperceptible, step-by-step kind of way? Let us remember, we are not now inquiring any thing about *religion*, about the *faith* which men have, but about the organization of religious men, so called, into societies or Churches.

There is a most remarkable coincidence between the manner in which the Christian Church grew out of the Jewish Church, and that in which the Methodist Church grew out of the Church of England. It will not be attempted here to argue, from this similarity, any thing particularly or legally

favorable to Methodism, for the valuableness or glory of Churches lies in the solid piety of their members. But the historic likeness is remarkable indeed; and as it lies directly in the way of the argument before us, it cannot be passed over unnoticed.

The Church of England was wending on its plodding way in dull and weary uselessness; her ministers had lost the spirit of the gospel, and her laity were worldly and irreligious. Listen to some of her own testimonies of herself.

Bishop Burnet said, (Conclusion of the History of his Own Times,) "I have lamented during my whole life that I saw so little zeal among our clergy. I saw much of it in the clergy of the Church of Rome, though it is both ill-directed and ill-conducted. I saw much zeal, likewise, throughout the foreign Churches. The Dissenters have a great deal among them; but I must own that the main body of our clergy has always appeared dead and lifeless to me; and, instead of animating one another, they seem rather to lay one another asleep."

Mr. Simpson says: "If a man happens to have got a little more zeal than ordinary, and labors more diligently to do good than the generality of his brethren, immediately they are all in arms against him. And nothing is more common than for his ecclesiastical superiors to frown upon him, to stigmatize him as a Methodist, and to oppose his interests in every way they can contrive. Whereas, a clergyman may be a man of pleasure and dissipation; gay, silly, foolish, trifling; he may spend his time in the diversions of the field; drink, swear, and live as foolishly as the most foolish of his flock, and yet no harm shall happen. He is no Methodist, and therefore every favor shall be shown him which he can desire. Methodism is like the sin against the Holy Ghost: it is neither to be forgiven in this world nor the world to come."—*Simpson's Plea for Religion*, p. 81.

Again he says, page 77: "But who is to blame for the spread of infidelity? The bishops and clergy of the land, more than any other people in it. We, as a body of men, are almost solely and exclusively culpable. Our negligence, worldly-mindedness, lukewarmness, and immorality, will ruin the country. And when the judgments of God come upon the land, they will fall particularly heavy upon the heads of our order of men."

Again he says: "I was almost going to say that we parsons have been the means of damning more souls than ever we were a mean of saving. From our profession it is that iniquity diffuses itself through every land. God forgive us! we have been too bad!"—Page 168.

Sir Isaac Newton said, "Infidelity will overrun Europe before the millennial reign of Christ commences; the corruptions of religion in all the Christian establishments cannot easily be purged away in any other manner."—*Observations on Man*, Part ii., sec. 81.

The Church of England was about as rotten religiously in the days of Wesley as the Jewish Church was in the days of Christ.

Amidst these corruptions, Mr. Wesley was led to look after a *revival of religion*. He met a few friends, and communicated his views to them. They continued to meet weekly for prayer, exhortation, and reading the Scriptures. These meetings became interesting. Religion revived with them. Men and women became converted. Their numbers increased, so that they had to divide and meet in different places. For the sake of concert and uniformity, they must needs have some memoranda of rules, in a small way, for their actions. Leaders, exhorters, or preachers, were appointed by Mr. Wesley, for the different meetings. They increased, extended, became numerous. More preachers were needed, which, of course, Mr. Wesley supplied as well

as he could. Thus he soon found himself—not by any intention of his own, but by force of circumstances—the head of a large number of “societies” in the Church; for they were all, at first at least, members of the Church of England. The societies extended; members increased: additional rules and regulations became necessary for immediate convenience, which Mr. Wesley supplied. The societies increased more and faster, until they soon became a matter of public and even national interest. The regular uniformity of their proceeding gave them the name of *Method-ists*. Everybody called them “Methodists;” and so they were Methodists; and they have worn the name gracefully, with some little exception, ever since. Their name was first given them in contempt and derision; but still it was their *name*. This was, in all probability, the case with the name *Christian*, first given to the disciples of Christ at Antioch.

But all this while Mr. Wesley and his associates in this remarkable revival of religion—for it was nothing more nor less than a remarkable revival of religion—had no intention of doing any thing with the question of *Church government*, beyond the making and adoption of such by-rules and regulations as their immediate necessities required. They had no intention of changing the ecclesiastical laws of England, or of interfering with them, or of setting up a rival or opposition establishment. They had no objection to the *Church government* of the Church of England. The only thing they sought to do was, to promote and extend *true religion* in the Church.

But the natural cohesion and sympathy of mutual piety—the *love* that *constraineth us*—cemented them together. A oneness of feeling, and zeal, and religious enjoyment, and holy purpose, pervaded the membership of these societies, and they *became* a Church—not by design or intention, but by the natural confluence of these elements and circum-

stances, which so strongly tend to fraternization, and which coalescence is a Church, according to the definitions which have been given. A Church is a society of Christians, preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and otherwise following Christ. Can any company or association of human persons rise higher than that in any evangelical scale?

And so Mr. Wesley's humble, unpretending, and simple-hearted prayer-meeting became one of the largest evangelical Churches in the world.

And yet it might be asked, Who established the Methodist Church? When and where was it organized? The historic facts do not allow of categorical answers to these questions. The *religion* of the Church was "established" eighteen hundred years ago by Jesus Christ; but the organization of the men professing it into an ecclesiastical association has been in the course of being established, or organized, as it now exists, during the last one hundred years and upwards. As is the case with all other ecclesiastical organizations, it *came into being* gradually, by the force of a thousand confluent and conforming circumstances.

It is true that, in 1784, the Methodists of America assumed more decidedly than they had previously done, independent ecclesiastical power. But they were previously a separate Church to all intents and purposes.

CHAPTER VII.

ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, CONTINUED.

THE reader will please to be reminded that the teachings of Jesus Christ were confined exclusively to the subject of RELIGION. He explained how and what men should do and believe, as individual or associate Christians. Beyond this he taught nothing.

And his apostles, after him, followed the same course. They preached exclusively on the subject of the *religion* of Christianity. The great revival on the day of Pentecost took place shortly after they entered upon their ministry. The heart-cheering and soul-warming sentiments and feelings consequent upon a conviction of so great a truth as the atonement and resurrection of a personal Saviour, accompanied by the immediate presence and power of the Holy Ghost, had the effect naturally of drawing the believers into close and intimate union and association; not because they belonged to a different external organization from other Jews—for they did not—but because they professed and enjoyed the same *religion*.

All these things took place in the Jewish Church. They did not conflict with or antagonize any thing belonging to their Church ritual or forms of government or even of worship. They were rather considerations and truths super-added thereto. It was merely the commencement and revival of true religion *in* the Jewish Church. But the farther it

progressed, the more powerful was the coalescence among the believers, and the more they became estranged in feeling and action from other Jews.

The natural flow of circumstances caused the breach of separation to become wider and wider. On the one hand, the apostles and other believers accused the unbelieving Jews of the most flagrant ingratitude, injustice, and crime, in falsely condemning and brutally sacrificing the Lord of life and glory; and on the other, they endeavored, by entreaty and persuasion, to win them over to the embrace of the truth. The believing Jews thus very soon became a distinct party in the Church, and they were opposed by the opposing party. But this was nothing more nor less than two parties in the Church. The believing Jews became, at the first, a *society in the Church*. And as their numbers increased, and the revival spread, and new converts came in, and it became locally, and numerically, and geographically necessary for them to divide into different societies, and hold more meetings at more places, it was only an increase and extension of the societies.

These societies, or the people composing them, must naturally be distinguished by some name, for they must frequently be spoken of in some way. At first they were called, not "Methodists," but "men of this way," disciples, or Nazarenes, and at length, by common consent, they were called Christians; and of course they have retained the name. They retained the name, not because it was a corporate name, officially assumed as the name of an organized ecclesiastical government, but simply because the current of public sentiment acquiesced in it. They were "called Christians," and therefore Christian was their name.

It is remarkable, too, and the consideration greatly strengthens this argument, that this name was given to this religious party, these societies, not at Jerusalem, where the first society was formed—the headquarters and general rendezvous, as I

may say, of the disciples—but away in a distant country, where the new religion had but just been heard of.

They were called Christians first at Antioch.

The advocates of the doctrine that Christians were, from the first, a corporation, distinct and independent as such, must account for the entire absence of a corporate name. A corporation implies the necessity of a name to distinguish the corporation. A corporation which has no name by which it may be identified or distinguished, is no corporation at all; for the very reason, in the nature of the case, that it possesses no ready means by which it may be singled out and spoken of as such.

It will, perhaps, not be contended that “the Christian Church” was organized as a corporation at Antioch, where the name was first known. Antioch was a Gentile city. The Jews there would not listen to Christianity, and Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles, and many of them were converted. It was here, many hundred miles from Jerusalem, among these Gentile converts, that the disciples first received the name of Christians. The Christian religion had now been preached, most probably, about eighteen or twenty years; and had spread far and wide among different people, and in different countries.

It is next to certain that the “corporation,” or “positive institution,” was not organized at this time at Antioch; though if organized specifically at any time and place, it would seem it must have been when and where the name was first known—from the consideration that no ecclesiastical authority was recognized as residing at this place at that time. This is seen from the fact, that about this very time the society at Antioch had to send to the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem for authoritative information respecting the necessity of circumcision on the part of Gentile converts.

The apostles and brethren preached religion—Christianity—

revival and spread of the truth respecting Jesus—in the Church and out of the Church—anywhere and everywhere. Specific, identical, and close coalescence—exclusive communion and association—adhesion amongst themselves and opposition to all opposers—union and affiliation in heart and soul and action—were as natural, under the circumstances, as the attraction of gravitation is natural. The connection of these believing Jews with their Church became rapidly more and more nominal—less and less real. As cohesion formed more and more closely in the one direction, the bonds of union became more and more slackened in the other, until they ceased to be recognized and felt. The probability is, that many of them were, in some places, excommunicated. “For the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.” John ix. 22. But excommunication from the Jewish Church affected them about as little now, as did the excommunication of Luther and his associates by the Pope of Rome.

And it is particularly appropriate just here to inquire, How did Luther and the other early Reformers get out of the Romish Church? So far as the Romish Church was concerned, they were excommunicated. But did *they* leave one Church and organize and join another? It is just as proper to say that Luther excommunicated the pope, as that the pope excommunicated Luther. In the course of events, they and their respective followers became dissevered, and a separate and distinct fraternization took place. Luther and his followers did not organize; that is, they did not form themselves into a distinct corporation, separate from and in opposition to the Romish Church. The preaching and propagation of the true principles of religion brought about a coalition, or a society; and then numerous societies. And then, in the progress and growth of these societies, some peculiar rules and regulations for the sake of order and uniformity became necessary. Thus

it was in the growth of the Church of Christ as it emerged out of Judaism; thus it was in the growth of the Methodist Church as it emerged out of Anglicanism.

When was the precise time at which the Methodist Church, or societies, could be legally and properly considered a Church? There never was any such precise period. When was the precise time at which the Reformed Church, under Luther, could be legally and properly considered a Church? There never was any such precise time. When was the precise time at which the Church of Christ could be legally and properly called a Church? There never was any such precise time. Churches are not corporations. They are companies, societies, or associations, of Christians.

If you look at the infant Christian Church—for it might as well be called a Church—a Church is a company of Christians following Christ—if you look at the infant Church, you see one, two, three, or more, *societies* in the Jewish Church; that is, in the Jewish Church considered as an outward, external organization. These societies have the true religion. They preach the true gospel, they enjoy religion, and they compose the germ of an external as well as the commencement of an internal Christianity. If you look into their rules or discipline, you find that, *at first*, they have none that are exclusive of the rules of the synagogue. But they will, necessarily, very soon require some little rules of direction not common to the synagogue. That is, as they draw off, by little and little, in pursuance of the natural laws of exclusive association, from a common and indiscriminate synagogue-worship, some rules additional and suited to their peculiar circumstances, become, from time to time, necessary to be adopted. And as they recede farther from the more regular Jewish worship of the synagogue, they become more and more established in an independent jurisdiction.

Every REFORMATION in religion, the world over, which has

resulted in the formation of separate ecclesiastical jurisdiction, has proceeded in this way. The Church grew into being in this way. The disseverance took place in this way. There is no exception. The formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and that of the Wesleyan Church in Canada, were not reformations in religion. They were mere voluntary jurisdictional divisions. Many other ecclesiastical divisions have grown out of specific causes. The establishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, as an offshoot from the Church of England, grew out of political causes respecting the two governments. It is impracticable for a separate Church organization to grow out of and become based upon a *reformation in religion* in any other way than this.

The first Churches of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, in Germany, in Switzerland, in England, and in France, were, *at first*, mere informal societies *in* the Romish Church. They *became* Churches, in perhaps a more proper sense, in the course of events, after a while.

“Christianity was as yet but an expanded Judaism. . . . Nothing is more remarkable than to see the horizon of the apostles gradually receding, and, instead of resting on the borders of the Holy Land, comprehending the whole world : barrier after barrier falling down before the superior wisdom infused into their minds.”—*Milman's Church History*, p. 158.

On pages 162 and 163 of Milman's History, may be found a very lucid explanation of the decision given by the apostles, and elders, and Church at Jerusalem, in reply to the appeal from Antioch, respecting the alleged necessity for circumcision on the part of Gentile converts. His American editor in a foot-note says :—

“The reason assigned for these regulations appears to infer that, as yet, the Christians in general met in the same places of religious assemblage with the Jews ; at least, this view gives

a clear and simple sense to a much-contested passage. These provisions were necessary, because the Mosaic law was universally read, and from immemorial usage, in the synagogues. The direct violation of its most vital principles by any of those who joined in the common worship, would be incongruous, and of course highly offensive to the more zealous Mosaisists."

Milman, it will be remembered, is a Church of England divine, and his editor in this country an Episcopalian. They may, therefore, both be supposed to favor the corporation doctrine of Church jurisprudence. And we are told by them that as late as about the twentieth year of Christianity, A. D. 53, the Jews and Christians, or, more properly, the believing and unbelieving Jews, worshipped indiscriminately in the same place, and, in the regular course of the synagogue services, listened alike to the regular reading of the law of Moses.

In truth, the wise, delicate, and nicely balanced decision of the brethren at Jerusalem, in reply to the inquiry from Antioch, can be accounted for upon no other grounds than this. They were all Jews except the Gentile converts : some believed in Christ and some did not ; but this distinction, great and powerful and all-pervading as it was in some respects, had not yet travelled so far into the habits of the people and customs of the times as to produce an *ecclesiastical* division of parties in the light of two distinct, separate, and independent Church organizations.

We must remember they had not the guidance of the New Testament Scriptures. And, let it be inquired, what is a Christian Church in the absence of the New Testament Scriptures, but "an expanded Judaism?" In external manners, in forms, customs, rites, ecclesiastical jurisprudence, and *outward* religion, saving in moral conduct, what, in the nature of the case, could be expected of Jews, such as the early

disciples were, but Judaism? Their *Christianity* consisted in *religious* faith and *experience* respecting the Lord Jesus Christ as being the true Messiah of God, the Saviour of the world. Beyond these considerations, what were the essential marks of difference between believing and unbelieving Jews? What is the difference now between a Christian and a Jew? Does a Christian repudiate any part, much less the whole, of the true and proper religion of a Jew? Do we repudiate the Old Testament Scriptures or any part of them? Is Christianity any thing more than a system of religious principles and truths, superadded to true and proper Judaism? And, moreover, to pursue more closely the argument in hand, Is there any thing inconsistent or incongruous in the notion of Jews and Christians having the same *form* of Church government? It is very true, that in the time of Christ the Jews had greatly perverted their religion, and that it has been greatly perverted by the rejection of the Saviour, if in nothing else, ever since. But the question is, Was there any thing in the Judaism of the time of Christ, except their perversion of *religion* and their rejection of the Saviour, that the disciples would feel themselves bound to make war with? Is there any thing else now? Judaism was intended to be the religion of God's chosen people, and to last till Christ, when it was to be succeeded by a religion for the world.

The introduction of Christianity was only the introduction of new and additional religious principles, and the repudiation of some Jewish superstitions and practices which they had engrafted upon their religion. Was it any thing more than the introduction and spread of true religion? Did it relate to *Church government* at all, beyond its universal injunction that, in all the affairs of life, men must conduct themselves with mildness, justice, patience, forbearance, and good-nature? A Church government or any other kind of government, or any thing else, that does not maintain these qualities and princi-

ples, is violative of Christianity, because these are catholic principles universally enjoined.

But what affinity is there between *Church government* and *religion*? Is there any *religion* in a *government*, abstractly considered, irrespective of the manner in which it is administered? The *form* of a man's house, or his coat, is as unsusceptible of the quality of religion or irreligion, as is the *form* of the government of a Church, and no more so. The introduction of Christianity was, therefore, no more calculated to lead the minds of the apostles and other disciples to a modification of their *form* of Church government, than to a modification of their dress, domestic habits, or education; unless they discovered something in their then existing Church government which contravened some of the Christian precepts. And we have already seen, that neither Christ nor his apostles ever intimated that there was any thing wrong in the then existing Church government of the Jews.

There can be no doubt but at first there was an indiscriminate mingling of believing and unbelieving Jews in all the public worship. The only peculiarity in the worship now and formerly was this, that when any of the apostles, or other public person believing in Christ, who was recognized as being qualified or entitled to fill the office of "angel," or preacher, chanced to be present, and obtained the privilege of preaching, he would *preach the doctrines* of Christ.

The Christian doctrines were now making a stir in Jerusalem. The unbelieving Jews violently opposed them; but they could not silence the believing preachers in the synagogue without a formal trial; and the doctrines continued to widen and deepen in the minds of the people. The line of demarcation between the two parties continued to widen, and grow more and more distinct and decisive. But the association among the believers was based upon and had reference exclusively to the new religious *doctrine* which they espoused.

It did not necessarily, violently, and at once separate them personally, and cause them to worship, in their regular Sabbath-day worship, separately and in different places from other Jews. A glance at the inspired history will show us that this was by no means the case. They worshipped together, to some considerable extent at least, for years.

By little and little their worship would become distinct and exclusive. No doubt at a very early period a whole synagogue, or most of it, would become converted to the Christian doctrines, and now it is a Christian synagogue, or Church: that is, the members thereof, or most of them, are believers.

After a while, opposition—violent opposition—would drive companies of believers to worship in other places than in a regular synagogue: that is, in a house built and used for this purpose. And when an entire synagogue, or most of it, would become converted to the Christian faith, and worship in their way, or when we see a private house used by persecuted believers as a place of worship, what *form of government* do we look for in those places? Why, the same as you would expect to see in any other synagogues or churches among any other Jews who did not believe in Christ. What was there to cause a change? Did Christ's doctrines violate the forms of Church government? Not in one word.

As matters proceeded, in the course of a few years the coalescence among the believers would naturally tend more and more to an exclusive public worship. This is the natural character and course of coalescence. The New Testament history does not lead us to conclude, however, that this exclusive worship was known for several years, probably for six or eight years or more after the death of Christ. But it is quite likely that it occurred in places, and to some extent, at an earlier period.

It must be remembered that this exclusive worship was the result, not of any Christian precepts or doctrines, but of oppo-

sition and persecution on the part of the unbelieving Jews, encouraged by the natural cohesion and tendencies of religious coalescence.

But this mingling of worship, and non-institution of new and radical forms of Church government, did by no means interfere with the exclusiveness of *religious* association, fellowship, and compact which the Scriptures enjoin. Unbelievers mingle in public Christian worship now: they take part oftentimes in the forms of worship, and are the subjects, negatively, of Church government. Religious coherence, fellowship, brotherly love, and unity of the Spirit, do not relate to any particular form of Church government; nor do they negative the idea that the members of such associations may belong to Church governments widely differing from each other in form.

The apostles pursued the most natural and simple course imaginable. They taught *religion*—boldly, industriously. But they did not teach upon the subject of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, for the very simple reason that they had nothing to teach. As official propagators of the gospel, they had not been instructed on the subject; and as individual Christians or believers, they saw nothing necessary to be taught. Their business was to “preach the gospel.” The preaching of the gospel, however, came incidentally in conflict with any serious, positive errors in Church government of a moral nature which might chance to exist, because it regulated morals everywhere. But it came, at that time, far, far less in conflict with errors of this kind than did the preaching of the gospel by Luther in the Reformation of the sixteenth century; and probably not more than did the preaching of the same truths in that of the eighteenth century by Wesley.

The terms *church* and *synagogue* are, in the idiom of our language, synonymous. It is, therefore, not improper to speak of Jewish churches and Christian synagogues, when

our remarks are located in such times as to apply the terms conversely. A name is not a thing: it is only the designation of a thing. Custom has applied the term church to the Christian assembly, and synagogue to the Jewish, which is all right enough. Understanding the terms, then, in this way, I was just going to point out a difference, in one respect, which must have been observable between the Jewish and Christian Churches after the latter came to have the control of their own assemblies, or after there came to be a clear and distinctive difference between the two kinds of assemblies.

The government of the synagogue was altogether Jewish. It was not Roman. The Jews were in a state of colonial vassalage to the Romans. But the Romans permitted the Jews to have their own laws in operation in all minor matters relating to religion and other things; but they kept a watchful eye over all public assemblies and public movements of the Jews. Hence the *ruler of the synagogue* was either a Roman officer, or one whom they approved. It was his duty to judge of all petty offences, either criminal, civil, or religious. Now, the Jewish high-priests, who were both civil and ecclesiastical officers, would not recognize as legal any synagogues which were under the control and supervision of Christian Jews. And hence they would not be likely to have a regularly authorized "ruler," recognized by the Jewish and Roman governments, to preside over them; and so they had to dispense with the services of that officer.

This was an exigency that arose in the course of events. It was not sought for or attempted to be brought about by any one. But so it was; and their synagogues or churches had to be conducted without a "ruler." But this change occasioned no serious difficulty. There was a plain, simple, and natural course which lay out before them. The civil and criminal jurisdiction of this officer must necessarily abate altogether. Their synagogues, when they became exclusively

such, had no connection with the government, and they could not, therefore, if they had desired it, punish civil or criminal offences. But the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of this officer could be easily retained, and his duties would naturally devolve upon the highest officer they had, viz., the "angel," the office answering to that of our minister.

It is by omitting to notice and trace these plain and simple circumstances, that persons have suffered themselves to be led into the notion that a system of high episcopal rule was set up and established in the primitive Church.

The office of "ruler" ceased in the early churches, for the simple reason that connection with the government ceased in regard to them. But the apostles and early disciples merely *kept along*, in ecclesiastical matters, in the same way they had been accustomed to all their lives, with only such incidental changes as were naturally called for, or superinduced by the circumstances which surrounded them.

Their business was to "preach the gospel to every creature" effectually.

From all the respectable histories of the early Church, inspired and uninspired, which have met my eye, I am able to find nothing that will not easily harmonize with all the foregoing views. They only, in my judgment, carry the argument and the reader a little farther onward than they have been accustomed to travel.

Milman says, (History, page 172,) "The synagogue and the church became more and more distinct, till they stood opposed in irreconcilable hostility."

CHAPTER VIII.

SYNOPTIC VIEW OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

THE Christian Church in the first century lies in extreme historic obscurity. The sacred record touches it but very lightly here and there; and the uninspired history—all that is regarded by the learned as authentic—scarcely reaches it. A very few scattering facts is all that we have.

For eight years or more, the gospel was preached exclusively to Jews. There appears, up to this time, not a thought to have entered the minds of the apostles, or any of the disciples, that it was ever to be preached to any one else. When Peter, at this time, was induced, by extraordinary revelation, to go and preach to Cornelius, it was regarded as highly sacrilegious, until the matter was fully explained. So that up to this time, Christianity—even its religion—was but very imperfectly understood and practiced. And Cornelius, though a Gentile, was not a pagan. He was a Proselyte of the Gate. That is, he had renounced idolatry and embraced Judaism without circumcision. The objection to his becoming a Christian, or having the gospel preached to him, was not that he was a Gentile, but that he was not circumcised.

It is, then, not easy to believe that the apostles were so perfectly versed in Christian jurisprudence as to have set up a new and finished system thereof, when they were so poorly versed in Christianity itself. The views of the apostles opened

out gradually, slowly, and regularly before them. They had been preaching now eleven years, and yet it was an entirely new idea to them that Christianity was to be a universal religion.

The first Christian "Church" that was known to exist was at Jerusalem. This was a matter of course, for they began to preach at Jerusalem. The *Church*, however, was merely this, that in that city were found a number of persons who *believed in Christ*. That simple fact alone was sufficient to entitle these persons, when spoken of in the aggregate, to be called a Church. The term *Church* was then and has ever since been applied to a company or association of Christians. If the disciples or believers at Jerusalem were *legal* believers—*true* disciples—and associated together as such in the worship and ordinances of Christ, how was it possible for them to be any thing less or any thing else than a CHURCH? This is not only the true meaning of the word, according to its most correct etymology, but it has for thousands of years been popularly and critically used as such.

Nothing whatever is known as to the origin of the Church at Rome. Milman says: "The history of the Roman community is most remarkable. It grew up in silence, founded by some unknown teachers." (History, p. 171.) Its planting has been attributed to Peter, and to Paul, and to both. Milman, in a foot-note at page 171, says: "The foundation of the Church of Rome by either St. Peter or St. Paul is utterly irreconcilable with any reasonable view of the apostolic history. It is very certain that Paul had never been at Rome when he wrote his epistle to the brethren there, if he was the author of its first chapter." Dr. Taylor, quoted by Dr. Clarke, says: "Paul had never been at Rome when he wrote this letter." Watson says the same thing. Dictionary, p. 826.

Dr. Milman thinks the conversion of Jews at Rome was the result of the return there of persons who were at Jeru-

saalem on the day of Pentecost. Watson advances the same opinion.

The Epistle to the Romans was written twenty-five years after the death of Christ. The existence of the Church at Rome was well known generally throughout Palestine and elsewhere; and the character of the brethren there for piety was quite celebrated. Rom. i. 8. It seems to be conceded on all hands that if any apostle ever had visited Rome before this time, it was Peter or Paul. And that Peter did so is held by none but Romish partisans to uphold the supremacy of Peter; and that Paul did not, we have his own statements. Then, who "founded" or "organized" the Church at Rome? To a straight-thinking, unsophisticated person, this looks very plain, and well chimes in with all the history we have on the subject.

When the three thousand were converted on the first preaching of Peter at Jerusalem, it is most likely that the number included some of the Jews who resided in Rome. They returned home believers in Christ. And were they then not a Church? Why not? They were a company of believers following Christ. If they united themselves together in an association, they were a Church. And as they continued to pray, and worship, and preach, the Church would increase until their faith would be spoken of, as St. Paul remarks, throughout the whole world.

This, or something nearly like it, must have been the way the Church of Rome began. It was the way most of the Churches, or at least many of them, originated in that early day.

But it may be asked, Where was their preacher? who was he? Let the point be borne in mind for the present, and the question will find an answer in the progress of these chapters. It would be out of place to enlarge upon that point here.

There was, then, no legal necessity for the presence or offi-

cial ministrations of an apostle at the origination or commencement of a Church at any particular place, in the early days of Christianity. Why could there be any greater necessity for such ministrations, in a strictly legal point of view, than there is for the same thing now? Suppose a few believers now, in any particular town or neighborhood, were to meet together and pray, and exhort, and worship God, after the Bible directions, and others join them, and they continue on to be faithful Christians, and sinners be converted among them, etc. Is that not a Church to all intents and purposes?

We must be careful that we do not get into a controversy with the Almighty. We may not debate *legal* questions with God. An association of men of *any* kind, where the Holy Spirit vouchsafes to make his presence and approval known—where God works in reviving and extending his grace—is a Church. Metaphysicians cannot, if they try till doomsday, make a difference between a *Church* and a “true Church,” or a *legal* Church. A Church is a *true Church* and a *legal Church*. That which is *untrue* or *illegal*, is spurious and void. A fig for all the technical and legal objections to a Church which has the plain pronunciations of the Lord God in its favor! We may not stop to make any inquiry whatever into the merits or character of any controversy, however proper or improper it may appear, between men and God.

Neither was there any legal necessity for the presence of the apostles at any of the early Churches, for the transaction of any ecclesiastical business. What is called “ecclesiastical authority,” was but little thought of in those times. There was no strife for power, nor did any particular honor attach to its exercise or custody.

If it became necessary, or was deemed expedient, to elect one or more bishops, (a bishop was a pastor,) it was done by popular designation; and the elders or bishops present, with the wisest and most pious of the brethren, would

solemnly and publicly ordain or set apart such minister or ministers, by the imposition of hands.

In the exercise of discipline, the most natural and simple course was pursued. In the synagogue-worship, under the supervision of the civil authority, the exercise of Church discipline was vested in the ruler of the synagogue. As the Christian assemblies became entirely distinct from all civil recognition, they of course had no "ruler;" but his authority, so far as it was strictly ecclesiastical, it is easy to see, would naturally fall upon the "angel," who was the bishop or pastor. But the bishop could not exercise this authority by personal investiture, as the ruler did. He could only exercise it in the character of a president. This is obvious, from the following considerations :

1st. He had no means of enforcing his decisions.

2d. He could not reasonably suppose—or others in his behalf—that the whole Church would in all cases acquiesce peremptorily in his decisions, unless they had—each Church for itself—solemnly agreed to do so, and had thus delegated to him this authority.

3d. The circumstances of danger, persecution, insult, injury, and interference, to which the disciples were constantly exposed, rendered it absolutely necessary for them to adhere to each other in the closest possible compact. Any government, therefore, which they might have among themselves, unauthorized by the laws of the land, must necessarily be of a very popular kind.

Accordingly, we hear Lord Chancellor King remark as follows: "Now, the manner of electing a bishop I find to be this: When a parish or bishopric was vacant, through the death of the incumbent, all the members of that parish, both clergy and laity, met together in the church, commonly to choose a fit person for his successor, to whom they might commit the care and government of the Church." See Primitive

Church, New York ed., p. 55 And so Eusebius, quoted by Lord King, says, "Upon the election of a bishop for the Church at Jerusalem, it was by the compulsion or choice of the members of that Church." Lib. 6, chap. 11, p. 312. And also Cyprian, after explaining how Fabianus was elected, says that "all the people cried out with one mind and soul that Fabianus was worthy of the bishopric." Lib. 6, chap. 28, p. 229. He also remarks, in regard to his successor, Cornelius, that he "was elected by the suffrage of the clergy and laity." Epis. 67, sec. 2, p. 198. "The same method being observed in the deposition of a bishop as in his election." Primitive Church, p. 103.

We also find that the laity participated in all the actions of the Church of importance, in reference to accusations of immorality against members.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church. But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Matt. xviii. 17. This is high authority. "Tell it unto *the Church*," and not to any particular officer or officers of the Church, as such. The information might be conveyed to the Church through any channel the Church might designate or recognize for that purpose; and most likely this would be some officer of the Church. And furthermore, what course the Church would adopt, in investigating and disposing of the matter, is another question. They might, or they might not, place it in the hands of certain functionaries for adjustment. But the foregoing Divine directions are express and conclusive, that *the right* to take cognizance, and finally to dispose of such offences, is with *the Church*, and not with any person or persons who might hold any offices in the Church, considered as officers.

Again: "Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person." 1 Cor. v. 13. This remark is addressed to the Church. Put him away from *among yourselves*. But the

form of proceeding by which they will do this, is another question.

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” Gal. vi. 1.

“We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.” 2 Thess. iii. 6.

That the early Churches exercised the right of dealing with disorderly persons directly, for the most part, without delegating its authority to special functionaries, is pretty clear, and cannot well be doubted.

“It is, therefore, the assembly of the people which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received them, by a free and authoritative consent, when recommended by others. The same people rejected or confirmed, by their suffrages, the laws that were proposed to them by their rulers, to the assembly; excommunicated profligate and unworthy members of the Church; restored the penitent to their forfeited privileges; passed judgment upon the different subjects of controversy and dissension that arose in the community; examined and decided the disputes which happened between elders and deacons; and, in a word, exercised all the authority which belongs to such as are invested with the sovereign power.” —Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History, vol. i., p. 87.

From this beginning, Christianity and Christian Churches spread and extended over the world. The apostles, one by one, were soon swept away. The Church continued to prosper, and its influence to extend. The several Churches were measurably independent of each other. They had no legal or official correspondence, in a strictly synodical sense. The bishop had charge of his own Church, but had nothing to do with any other.

Synods were first known in Greece, in the second century. Mosheim says, "It was only in the second century that the custom of holding councils commenced in Greece, from whence it soon spread through the other provinces." (Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 93.) Watson says the first ecclesiastical council, except the meeting of the Church at Jerusalem, was held in the middle of the second century.

The meeting of the "apostles and elders" at Jerusalem, where they determined the question propounded by the brethren at Antioch, respecting the necessity of circumcision, was not a council, in any ecclesiastical sense. It was a meeting of the principal persons in the Church or Churches at Jerusalem.

Christianity had now been publicly preached, since the death of the Saviour, twenty years. There were Christians and Christian Churches throughout Palestine, and in foreign countries. They must have amounted to hundreds. That any of these Churches were represented in this so-called "council," there is not the slightest testimony. It would have required, perhaps, a year's time to have convened such a delegation; whereas, we find that "the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter" immediately upon the arrival of the messengers from Antioch. Jerusalem was really, but informally, the head-quarters of Christianity. It was oldest at that place: there were, no doubt, more aged and experienced disciples there than would be likely found at any other place; and some of the apostles were no doubt generally if not constantly found there. Hence, the disciples at Antioch would naturally send to Jerusalem for a reliable solution of this question. The meeting was composed of the leading and most prominent brethren at Jerusalem.

Supposed expediency, no doubt for good, brought about the custom of several churches, or the official members of several

churches, meeting together to make regulations for their mutual advantage. This is very natural.

In process of time, the bishops having charge of the churches in the principal cities, acquired considerable dignity. They claimed superiority over those in the smaller towns, or in the country; and this dignity or superiority was generally tacitly conceded to them. Not that they had any legal right that others had not; but their station was esteemed higher, and in many ways they were deemed superior. The bishop of the largest and most influential church must be president at these synods or conferences; and then at the councils, which were a still larger convocation of churches, there began to be contention as to which church had the right to have its bishop for president.

The delegates, too, from the churches, began to be delegates by right, or rather regular members of these synods; and instead of representing the will and interests of their respective churches, they attended chiefly to their own affairs; and so, one step upward in the scale of dignity and power, made another so much the more necessary, in their estimation.

It is not difficult to see that as these various offices—which were certainly badges of distinction—would pass from one man to another, as age succeeded age, at a time, too, when popular ignorance and superstitious notions respecting ecclesiastical dignity were much more prevalent than they are here in these days, that what was once regarded as only a mark of honor, would after a while become nearly, and then altogether, a vested right.

The bishops, especially those of the cities, began to be bishops indeed, with no little authority.

It has been asked by writers who were trying to sustain high prelacy, when this great change in the authority of bishops came about? When did they change from the hum-

ble pastor of a congregation of Christians, to the high pretensions they were known to possess in the fifth and sixth centuries, and afterwards? And they claim that unless *the time* is given when this "revolution," as they call it, took place, that they have a right to conclude that it did not take place at all, and that "bishops" had these powers from the beginning.

The same kind of argument would bring us to the conclusion that unless *the time* can be pointed out when the weather changed from midsummer to midwinter, that it was always winter, because it now is; or, unless you can show when a person changed from childhood to manhood, you must conclude that he was always a man, because he is a man now. When did the Pope of Rome become pope? We know that this power in the bishops of Rome was more than five hundred years in the course of a gradual acquisition. As Jerome says in regard to the acquisition of power by the bishops, it was "by little and little." That is the most natural and reasonable mode in which the thing might be expected to come about; and it also fully agrees with all the authentic history we have on the subject.

The city churches always took the lead. Those in the country had derived their existence from them, and they naturally looked to them for support, counsel, encouragement, etc. In case of doubt or dispute in or amongst the country or village churches, the question would naturally be referred to the city church, or rather, as the matter really became after a while, to the city bishop.

This advice and counsel would soon acquire the character of oversight, superintendence, and jurisdiction.

So that it is easy for the mind to trace, in those times and under those circumstances—which will be more enlarged upon in future chapters—the gradual, almost imperceptible, but sure progress of authority from the humble and pious pastor

of a handful of Christians, on through several ages, and upward to the prerogatives of episcopal rule and dominion over the clergy and laity of a whole country surrounding a city.

At length, as Christianity advanced and became influential, questions arose between these city bishops as to the extent of their several powers and jurisdictions. These questions did not proceed far, however, before they became settled, so far as the smaller cities were concerned, by the Metropolitan question.

The Council of Nice, in 325, and of Antioch, in 341, concentrated and extended episcopal rule still farther. The former declared that "Bishops in the provinces should be subject to the Metropolitan;" and that "no one should be appointed bishop without the consent of the Metropolitan." This regulation was followed up in the Western Church at a somewhat later period; so episcopal rule became vested in the bishops of Jerusalem, Antioch, Cæsarea, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, Carthage, Lyons, and a few other cities that claimed to be each a metropolis.

But the ambition of ambitious men was not yet satisfied. Episcopal rule was not sufficiently centralized for those in the *larger* cities. The Metropolitans had already acquired more or less of civil power, which tended still further to stimulate their ambition. In the fifth and sixth centuries, the *patriarchal* government arose; and Constantinople, Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria, became the seats of those primates who bore the title of Patriarch. Each one had all the episcopal authority he could grasp, and all the civil power he could wrench from the seats of political jurisdiction, which was no little indeed.

But the end was not yet. Power was still divided; and in the strife for supremacy, Alexandria and Antioch had to give way, and leave the field to Rome and Constantinople. Here was the celebrated and bitter and long-contested strife for

universal primacy. This contest mingled with the greatest political events of those ages. In the fifth and sixth centuries, it became settled in the west in favor of Rome; and in the course of the seventh, the east was obliged to give way, and so the supremacy of the pope and the papal system became established.

And thus the Church continued under the rule of Popery until God, in his providence, diffused more light over the world; and until a man, endued with more intrepid bravery, true heroism, and dauntless courage, than any other man known to history, rose in apparently superhuman strength, and, in the name of simple, single TRUTH, challenged the world to combat. At Worms, the only battle-field which is truly and transcendently great—second only to Calvary—Martin Luther broke the spell of priestcraft, excommunicated the pope, subdued the emperor, opened to the world the light of truth, and gave back to the Church her long-lost effulgence and beauty.

CHAPTER IX.

A MORE GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHARACTER OF THE
APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

THE Church dates from the call of Abraham. The end of all religion is the salvation of man; and the end and object of a Church is the more ready promotion and encouragement of religion.

God had set himself about the work of salvation; not salvation by prerogative; for if so, then there were no need of a Church or of other means of grace or instrumentalities of religion. He set himself about the work of religion for men, if we may so compare things, in the same way in which a wise and judicious missionary would proceed in a heathen country, where all true religion was utterly unknown. He adapted his plans to meet the character and circumstances of the people whose salvation he designed to bring about.

It is neither irreverence nor disparagement to the Divine administration to say, that the antediluvian scheme of salvation was a failure. Men might have been saved under it, but they would not, and they were not. And further and more extensive means of salvation were instituted.

In the Divine economy, it was determined to begin, as it were, on a small scale: to instruct, first, a single family, and originate there a proper sense of obligation to God, and make him and his posterity missionaries for the teaching of others.

Abraham was directed by direct miraculous communication ; but this is not *religion*.

The whole world was sunk in idolatry and gross ignorance of God, save Abraham and his family. And their religion became very superficial indeed, after the death of their ancestor. An overruling Providence suffered them to be put in sore bondage, in order that they might be taught a deep and lasting lesson of their *need* of Almighty protection.

Dependence upon God, and trust in him, as a merciful benefactor, were further taught them in the circumstances of their deliverance from bondage to the Egyptian king, and restoration to the liberty and privileges they enjoyed under Moses.

Thus it was that God, in dealing with the Israelites, in instilling into them the rudiments of religion, began at the beginning. His providence, in overruling the general condition of Israel, corresponded with his more particular teaching respecting the special services he required of them. Thus he began at the beginning, taking the first step first, and the next next, improving upon the past, and enlarging, as matters proceeded, in the most skilful and philosophic manner imaginable.

The Divine patience, prudence, skill, and wisdom manifested in these eclectic and elementary teachings of the first principles of religion, call for the profoundest admiration of men and angels.

The captivity in Babylon served, among other purposes, to disseminate these religious teachings to considerable extent, among other nations, the fruit of which was seen in the favorable effect observed in the Hellenistic Jews, and among the Gentiles, in the days of the opening of a purer religion.

But all this was a physical religion. It was a religion of facts, and acts, and things ; and therefore it was superficial and imperfect. It was merely elementary. It bore the same

relation to religion proper that the spelling-book and the black-board do to the scholar in mature life. The system is expressly spoken of as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ.

And in the fulness of time—that is, at the proper time—that is, when the state of religion among the Jews and the world made things ready—the Saviour made his actual appearance in the world.

Now, for the first time, the condition of things in the Church of the Jews, and out in the world, was such, that religion proper—spiritual religion, could safely, with good prospect of success, be introduced into the world.

There was nothing wrong in Judaism proper, no more than there is in a boy's passing through the primary and sophomore classes before he graduates. The wrong *now* consists in obstinately clinging to the physical or primary religion, when the spiritual religion is offered.

The inherent virtues of the primary religion, or that which made it acceptable to God, were seen in its ordinances: in their administration, reception, and use. Now, the ordinances are not taken away, but their position is very materially changed. In the former, they were the primary, fundamental things: now they are only subsidiary and secondary.

It was a great change from Judaism to Christianity. The first Church was a new, a very new thing in the world. It was the greatest step that ever the world took at once. To bring the Jews, even a small portion of them, to mount so high a platform as the Christian faith, required all the skill, and enterprise, and wisdom, and power of Omnipotent supervision and miraculous interposition.

The advent of the Saviour, and his agency in these high and profoundly interesting scenes and performances, found the circumstances of the Jews—their moral, civil, educational, military, political, and religious circumstances—as they chanced to be. Their connection with the Roman govern-

ment was one of the accidents of the times. But all these things were to be carefully noted, observed, and worked up to, in setting this great spiritual machinery agoing. So great was the mental and spiritual work of this auspicious and most conspicuous period, that the very ground itself reeled under the burden of something, it knew not what.

God was now fixing the massive fastenings of TRUTH solidly in the world. For truth and error are really the only antagonist principles known to the universe, and the only instruments the soul can feel. Truth had made its entrance into the world, and must have place. And error, with all its schoolboy notions of things, however honestly conceived, in its juvenile twilight, must give way.

What great subject has Truth now in hand, and in relation to which it is proclaiming its mighty fiat? What is to be set right now, that has never been right before? Four thousand years of preparation and arrangement for the establishment of what?

The arrangement of a suitable *form* for the mere *government* of a few disciples in Palestine? If a conception so infinitely liliputian could be so distinguished, it is insulting to the Divine administration.

Upon this rock—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—upon *this* rock—larger, solider, than the under pillars of nature—upon this rock I will build my Church.

And so he did. Then—there—by his life,—by his blood,—by his burial and resurrection,—by his ascension up where he was before,—by and in these things he did build his Church: he did give foundation and moveless solidity to his TRUTH.

That truth is here now. It is in the heart of the Christian. It is in the pith and marrow of the Church. It is in, and constitutes the essence of the salvation of man. It is a work worthy of God. It is a work that will do him honor—un-

speakable honor—in the presence of cherubim and seraphim, in the hoary years of eternity.

But the mere organization of Christian people into some particular *form* of government, in these ages, has a mere chronological relation to those of succeeding years. While the “CHURCH” then planted by the right hand of God—that is, the TRUTH thus fastened upon and made patent in the world respecting human salvation—is linked to the present by the span of the hand of the Almighty.

The slightly celebrated “Tracts for the Times,” New York edition, page 6, of volume i., tell us that “the *sacraments*, not *preaching*, are the sources of Divine grace.”

If this be true, then, indeed, it would seem that the manner in which the Church was *officered*—the precise *form* of its organization—the exact functions and powers to be placed here and there for the performance and regulation of this and of that means of grace, operating between God and the people, are the great and important matters respecting the Church.

But if, on the contrary, it be true that the gospel itself is the power of God unto salvation—that God manifests his power of salvation in the gospel and not in the sacraments thereof—then the matter is materially changed, and the preaching of the gospel becomes the great means, in the hands of men, for man’s salvation.

This seems to be the main question which is to determine the character of the original Church.

If “to administer and receive Christ’s mystical body and blood” was “*the great work* which Christians did every day,” to use the language of the same Tracts, at page 175, as quoted from Bishop Beveridge, then, indeed, the end of Church organization is a thing quite different from what has been supposed in all Christendom in all time. Then the virtue of the administration of the sacraments, which is the

same thing as the true or real communication of God's grace, depends upon the "*mystical*" character of the officer whose hands convey the elements in which the sacraments are communicated.

And then, indeed, a sacrament is no longer an *obligation*, taken personally by him who receives the element, which is the mere instrument or symbol of its use; but what we are wont to regard as the mere element or symbol—viz., mere common water, and mere common bread and wine—becomes the sacrament itself. And the mystic administration of it gives to it—that is, to the water, the bread, and the wine—the virtue and power of almighty grace! Either the *elements* themselves—the water, bread, and wine—become mystically changed into grace, essentially and substantively, which is transubstantiation, or the grace of God is conveyed in the elements as the only and proper vehicle of transmission, which is consubstantiation.

But, on the contrary, if *the gospel* be the power of God's saving grace, according to St. Paul, then the matter becomes materially changed. The gospel is the good news—the welcome information—the truth, which Christ published. And the dissemination—the republication—the diffusion—the communicating hither and thither—the preaching of this news, this word, this truth, becomes the "great work" in the salvation of the world.

Either the *sacraments* or the *gospel* are the power of God unto salvation. Romanists, a few high churchmen, and a still lesser number of Baptists, and perhaps a few other exclusives, tell us that the grace of God is found in the water, and in the bread and wine; but the apostle, and the whole scope of biblical teaching, tell us the contrary.

The Saviour, just before his ascension, commanded his apostles to go into all the world and disciple all nations. And what particular thing did he tell them to do in order to

this end? He told them to "PREACH THE GOSPEL." St. Paul regarded the administration of the sacraments of such comparative non-importance, that he said he was not sent to baptize, but to preach: that is, that the preaching was the great and important work which so constantly engaged his attention, that the administration of the sacraments must be attended to by others.

In the primitive days of the Church these matters were all well understood. The Church consisted of *the disciples in association*, a mere company of disciples, preachers, and people. There was no more of mystical character attaching to the *association* as such, than to the association of other Jews or other people. They preached and believed the great truth. This was their peculiarity.

The Church of ordinances—the Church in which ordinances and sacraments were the sources and channels of God's grace—was the Church of the Jews. But this Church is now superseded by a more intelligible and intelligent truth-communicating Church, in which the gospel preached is the great power of God.

The original Church was a company, or in its subdivision several companies of Jews, who were disciples of Christ, or, as they were afterwards called, Christians, which consisted of *preachers* and *people*. Their object and aim as Christians, or disciples, was to increase religion in their own hearts, and extend it over the world in the hearts of others.

Their very *association* itself was, like other natural and prudential measures, a mere natural and prudential measure.

If the primitive Christians regarded the *manner* of their *association*, externally considered—the distribution of official duties—the assignment of this duty to this Church officer, and of that duty to that—as the important matter, or as an essentially important matter in the enterprise of religion, it is utterly unaccountable that they did not do two things: first,

pursue one uniform and invariable course themselves in respect thereto ; and, secondly, leave us upon the record a prescribed form for us to copy.

But that they did neither of these is a transparent truth.

We conclude, then, that *the character* of the primitive Church is to be sought for in *the principles of their religion*, and not in *the mode of their association*.

PART TWO.

Church Polity and Principles.

CHAPTER I.

THE TEST OF A CHURCH'S VALIDITY.

THE Church of England, the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Churches, define *a Church* as follows :

“A congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinances in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.”

That is, perhaps, as correct a brief definition as need be given. Probably no objection could be made to it. A congregation of faithful men—not a thousand confederate congregations, but *a congregation*. This is what a Church was in the days of the apostles, and it is presumed it will not be pretended that any human authority is competent to change materially, much less radically or wholly, the character of a Divine institution, as it was Divinely recognized and spoken of.

Looking then, at one of these Churches, or “congregations,” how are we to determine whether it is or is not a true and valid Church of Christ?

It was said in a previous chapter, that there are but two

modes in which ecclesiastical writers undertake to determine this question; and it might be added, that they are the only two modes in which the question is capable of being looked into. The one is by the validity of the *orders* of the Church's ministers; and the other is by comparing the Church itself with the Scriptures. Let us look at these two things separately and carefully.

We will begin with the first. Here is an association of persons, with the man they call their minister at their head, claiming to be a Church of Christ. And we first inquire whether this minister has proper orders; and we find that he was ordained by a certain other minister, Mr. A. But this does not settle the question; for if the ordination, exclusively considered, makes him a minister, then the same question arises in regard to the orders of his ordainer. And we make the same inquiry in regard to him; and then in regard to his ordainer, and his, and his, and his, on, on, and where are we to stop? We cannot stop safely until we arrive at a person in the chain whose orders do not depend upon those of any other minister. And we cannot, evidently, find such a person until we arrive at an apostle, eighteen hundred years back. This is apostolic succession.

It is true that this line of orders, as we have just now traced it, does not run in a channel of *bishops*, as the prelatist contends it must; but still it is apostolic succession, running in the common body of ordained ministers.

By this mode of ascertaining the validity of a Church, it is evident we cannot avoid this most baseless of all theories ever attempted to be taught by sensible men. An improper ordination at any one point in the history of the Church is as fatal as at any other point—the next link back from our present minister, or the hundredth one above that. What can be more preposterous than the idea that an ordination supposed to have been performed a hundred or a thousand years ago,

whether it was correctly or incorrectly performed, or whether in truth it was or was not performed at all, can materially affect the character of men, either individually or collectively considered, who live in the present day?

Do we dream our theology? No. Our theology must come from the Bible. The Bible is the test of every thing concerning religion. The Bible is the word of God, and the only word of God we have on this subject. It is the sole test of all doctrines, and the sole arbiter of all religious questions. But for the Bible, we could have no knowledge of the necessity or usefulness of either a Church or a ministry. We must go there, and there only, to ascertain the essential character of either, or of any thing else pertaining to the subject of religion. An act that corresponds with the description of repentance given in the Scriptures, is repentance. An act which answers the description of prayer, there found, is prayer. A person who answers the scriptural description of a minister, is a minister. An association of persons which answers the scriptural description of a Church, is a Church. Metaphysical refinements upon the Scriptures amount to nothing.

We have before us an association of persons claiming to be a Church; and in proceeding to examine whether they are or are not a Church, truly and properly, the first thing we do is to turn right away from the thing to be examined, and search up some Church records, made ten, twenty, or forty years ago, and inquire therein how, and by whom, some certain individual man who chances now to be a minister in this Church, or in some other, was ordained to the ministry. Well, we find that he was ordained by some one who was or was called a bishop, or who was or was called a presbyter. And so we may trace back the successive ordinations, either among bishops or presbyters, it matters not a farthing which, until we become tired or lost in the musty and irresponsible records of Churches, among old forgotten almanacs, or the annals, cor-

rect or incorrect as they may be, of bygone ages. And as we track up these ordinations, we may be supposed to find or not to find a broken place in the chain. If we find what we suppose to be a faulty place in the chain, we conclude that all subsequent ordinations hanging upon that one are spurious, and the Churches connected therewith are not Churches. Or if we can be made to believe that all is right, and the chain is complete, then we rejoice in the complete validity of all ministers and Churches connected with such ordinations.

You may trace this line of ordinations in a channel of "bishops," according to the Puseyite doctrine, or in a channel of "elders" or "presbyters," according to some misguided but well-meaning persons who contend for the validity of ordinations, and consequent validity of Churches, as based upon the doctrine of ministerial parity; or upon the no more sound notions of some who appear to think that a large and respectable portion of Christendom is dependent for its Christianity upon the legality of some ordinations received or conferred by Mr. John Wesley, or some other venerated minister or ministers of past ages. The one may contend for the validity of his Church because of the certainty and validity of his ancient ordinations; and the other may contend for the validity of his Church because of the certainty and validity of his ancient ordinations.

I am not attempting to take part among these disputants, but am trying to look into the doctrine of *ministerial authority, personally transmitted*, as the basis of Church validity, abstractly and by itself.

In the chronology of bygone ages, we find a man who lived a thousand years ago, in a distant part of the world, and who has been dead and forgotten nearly as long, and whose name, even, is nearly or quite blotted out from the memory of the world, and we ascertain that in one official transaction of his he acted either ignorantly or wickedly. And because of

such ignorance, or wickedness, it matters not which, you and I, and our associates, men and women, who are trying to be religious and follow Christ, in his Church and in his doctrines, are wholly at fault—entirely mistaken—we are no Church—we cannot comfort ourselves with the rich promises of the Saviour—we are travelling *the other way*!

And this decision is pronounced against us without examining or looking at *us* at all. It has not been inquired whether *we* are pious or wicked: whether we observe the commands of Christ or no: whether we are following the Saviour or Belial: whether we are “a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered,” or no; but whether or not some one man, who once lived and died, chanced to perform an illegal act, either from ignorance or wickedness. Really this seems to savor but slightly of the mild benevolence of which we read in the Scriptures.

And, if arguments of this sort are too absurd for sober reflection, what are we to think of those arguments which claim to show that the Methodist Church is not now a valid Christian Church, because of some illegal ordination—supposing it to be illegal—which Mr. Wesley either received or conferred, in England, a hundred years ago?

And if the Methodist Church does not and cannot *lose* its proper apostolic character in consequence of some ecclesiastical error supposed to have been committed by Mr. Wesley in performing the rite of ordination, how can it be contended, on the other hand, that it *has* its proper apostolic character in virtue of the legality of such ordinations? Is not the *argument* as good on the one side as the other?

Is the validity of this Church—the true apostolic character of this great integral portion of Christendom—to be tested by inquiring into the legality of some official act of Mr. Wesley? Is it any more important to inquire into the

validity of the orders of Dr. Coke or of Mr. Wesley, in determining the validity of the Methodist Church now, than to inquire into the orders of some other ministers, farther back, five hundred or a thousand years, from or through whose hands Mr. Wesley received his orders? What is the difference?

We must hold to the doctrine of *transmitted authority*, from minister to minister, and test the validity of an existing Church thereby, or we must repudiate that doctrine, and apply some other test.

If a high churchman undertakes to argue against the validity of the Methodist Church, or the orders of Methodist ministers, from the supposed lack of authority in Mr. Wesley to ordain Dr. Coke, we may very properly show that *his argument* amounts to nothing, by showing that a legal apostolic presbyter is a legal apostolic bishop. But we may not make such an argument for the different purpose of showing that the Methodist Church is a legal Church. For, if we essay to test the validity of a Church by applying the doctrine of transmitted authority, how can we complain of an opponent for holding us to our own doctrines, and requiring us to carry them out in the application of such test? How can we use such a test ourselves, and then repudiate the doctrine, when the high churchman does the same thing?

Then, if the validity of a Christian Church may not be tested by a valid, unbroken chain of transmitted authority from one ordained minister to another, either in a line of so-called bishops or presbyters—for the *doctrine* is the same in either case—then there is left but one other mode in which that question may be tested.

This other mode is to compare it with the Scriptures. We go to the company or association of persons claiming to be a Church, and we *examine it*. We inquire into the faith which they profess; the lives which they live; and the official

acts which they perform. And if we find that this faith, and life, and official duty, conform to the Divine prescription for these things—if they are such as constitute a Church according to the scriptural description of a Church—then they are a Church. We have a Divine model. Now have we got a thing to fit the model? If they be holy men and women, live after the Bible, have the gospel preached, and the sacraments administered: if they thus square and plumb with the straight edge of the word of God, and thus answer the infallible description, who dare say they are not a Church?

The Church of Christ is not a corporation, as many seem to suppose. It does not act by virtue of authority granted to it by a special investiture, and transmitted to its present officers. Ecclesiastical acts are performed by the direct and immediate command of God. God does not command some men, in contradistinction to others, to be a Church. He requires all men to be a Church. It is the present duty of all men to step instantly into Church communion. This duty rests equally and alike upon all. Some men obey the injunction, and some do not. The duty to be a Church is as broad and as patent as the duty to tell the truth, or to be benevolent. There is nothing special about it.

How do we determine when men obey the Bible in regard to other duties? We examine their conduct, and see whether it conforms to the Divine prescriptions.

The rights of bodies corporate are determined by examining the grant of power, and the identity of the body claiming it.

But this is not so with the Church. Church duty is universal duty. And it is worse than nonsense to talk about the *right* of men to perform a *duty*.

The question of the validity of a so-called Church, then, is the question whether the persons composing the association are performing the duty, in that respect, which the Bible enjoins.

Men who lived in other ages of the Church were subject to one and the same rule. Each man was answerable for himself. They did or they did not obey the Scriptures in regard to its laws respecting Church membership.

The only thing respecting Church duty or association which is special, and not universal, pertains to its ministry. And this duty God places here and there by direct and immediate appointment. Those who deny the direct and immediate call to the ministry by God, must necessarily regard the Church in the light of a corporation.

This is their error. The Church has not the characteristics of a corporation, and does not, therefore, look into its past history, and the official acts of other men, to determine the validity of its present character.

But we are right—we are Christians—if we carry the word of God in our hands, and make it the man of our counsel, and square our faith and our conduct accordingly. We are Christians, and *therefore* we are a Church.

And, on the other hand, suppose we ourselves—the association of persons in question—are not of the private and official stamp prescribed in the Bible. Our minister may have been ordained by a presbyter, or a bishop, or an apostle; nay, an apostle himself may have been our pastor,—we are not a Church—we are at enmity with God.

The Bible, by an immediate appeal to it, is the test, and the only test, of every thing pertaining to religion—to Christianity—to Churches. By it the minister is tested—by it the private Christian is tested—by it the Church is tested. Chronology is not Christianity; nor is there any possible process, human or angelic, wise or foolish, by which it may be moulded and fashioned into it, or be made to answer in its stead.

It is a mistake to suppose a Church cannot exist without a pastor. A Church cannot *regularly* exist without a pastorate,

but a temporary or accidental irregularity would not destroy the being of any institution. A Church is an association of Christians following Christ.

But suppose, it may be inquired, the minister or pastor of a Church be acting in bad faith—how does that affect the Church? It affects it in the light of a temporary misfortune. The minister is not Christ's minister, and hence the Church is temporarily without a pastor. But *they* are acting in good faith. They are Christians.

But suppose the minister to be acting in good faith, under the belief he was properly ordained, but is really not ordained legally. What then? Nothing. The authority to confer ordination, as we shall see when we come to examine that question, is in the Church. So, if by possibility the act or ceremony of ordination was illegal, though supposed to be legal at the time, the parties acting in good faith, a recognition of the act by the party who had the authority to perform it necessarily does away the illegality, and it becomes legal by the very act of continuous recognition. If a Church has authority to confer ordination, it has authority to recognize ordination which was supposed to have been conferred.

In some respects the minister is the servant or agent of the Church. This is the relation in so far as the particular Church is interested in the question of the minister's ordination, in order that he may properly minister the gospel to them. Well, what matters it whether an agent's power of attorney be legal or illegal, as to his principal, so long as such principal receives and recognizes his agency? An agent cannot damnify his principal by acting under an illegal power of attorney given by and still recognized by such principal. Under such circumstances, no authority can be illegally exercised.

So that if the Scriptures be the test of a Church's validity, and not the orders of the minister, as depending upon transmitted authority coming down through some channel or other

from the apostles, then their identity as a Church is not disturbed by any historical question respecting the orders of their minister, if they both be Christians acting in good faith.

We must not confound an abstract question that might arise as to the validity of the ordination of a certain minister, with the present relation of such minister to a particular Church as their pastor. If they believe him to be a true minister, he is, so far as the question of their being a Church is concerned, a true minister. They could not so believe, unless they so recognize him, and the recognition is one of the chief ends of ordination.

It may be objected to this doctrine, that it gives to each and every congregation the right to ordain their own minister; and that this will work disturbance in such Churches as the Methodist or Presbyterian organizations.

Let us see. The Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal Churches in this country are federate Churches. The separate churches of which the confederation is composed, if they ever existed independently out of the confederation, certainly had that right. But they have thought best, for supposed mutual benefit, to confederate. And one of the original rights voluntarily relinquished to the confederacy is the ordaining of ministers. The mutual agreement, in terms or otherwise, is, that ordination shall be performed by the authority of the confederacy.

This is one of the commonest things among men. Every citizen relinquishes some of his natural rights to the government under which he lives. His natural right is, to enforce justice in his own favor from all men. But he does not now possess that right. If I withhold from him his goods or his money, he cannot *come and take it*. He must get the officers of the law to do it for him. One of these States cannot levy war and regulate commerce. Why? Because, and only because she has confederated with the rest of the States in the

formation of a general government; and in this compact she has relinquished these and many other powers in favor of the confederation. This is one of the fundamental laws of association, and applies as well between the separate churches and the confederation, as between the individual person and the congregational church.

We conclude, then, that "a church" is "a congregation." And, in more modern language, a Church is a confederation of churches. In either case, their trueness or validity does not depend upon the opinions or actions of men away up in the former history of the organization, but solely on their *present conformity to the word of God*. The Methodist Church is a true Church—or any one of her separate churches—because of its present character, and not because Mr. Wesley or Dr. Coke did or said this or that. Suppose she were to depart from the faith once delivered to the saints: would the lingering written or unwritten memorials of John Wesley, to be found in her archives or recollections, serve to keep in her the evangelical vitality? Ask the word of God what are its imperative requisitions.

We may very properly hold up the orders of Mr. Wesley to a high churchman, in reply to *his argument*, to show that our orders are *the same as his*. But that does not prove either Church to be good or bad.

We hope to speak of *ordination* in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER II.

“HEAR THE CHURCH.”

“MOREOVER, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church ; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that ye shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matt. xviii. 15–20.

Here, beyond all question, the final power of excommunication is lodged in “*the Church*.” If the delinquent would not listen to his friend, and then if he would not listen to one or two other friends, expostulating and exhorting the same thing, then the matter was to be laid before the Church ; and if he would not *hear the Church*, he must be expelled from the society.

And now the question is, Who, or where, or what is *the*

Church, before whom this information is lodged, and who has this power of final disposition?

It would seem that the careful reader could scarcely fail to find an answer to this question in the foregoing quotation from the words of Christ himself.

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

The gathering together of people *in the name* of Christ, or otherwise, is assigned as the reason for the presence or absence of Christ from such assembly. When they are gathered together *in his name*, he makes one of the assembly. If they are gathered together in some other name, his presence may not be looked for.

Now, what is there conceivable that can give a congregation the character of a Church more certainly and surely than the recognition and presence of Christ? A fig for all human considerations and arguments respecting the “validity” of a Church where Christ is not present. And if Christ be present, a fig for all human considerations and arguments going or trying to prove that such association of persons professing to be Christians are not a “true” or “legal” Church. Who cares for what men choose to call *valid*, or *true*, or *legal*, in defining the character of Christian assemblies, so long as the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ approves and honors such assemblies by his Divine presence? Can any thing be more *true*, or *legal*, or *valid*, than God? Men may say that my Church is untrue and invalid, and welcome, if Christ does but recognize it and vouchsafe his presence there. And, on the contrary,

“If God his residence remove,
Or but conceal his face,”

what actions, or words, or rites, on the part of men, can give validity to a Church?

Where two, or three, or ten, or forty, or a thousand, are gathered together *in my name*—that is the test. Or, in other words, are they Christians following Christ in his gospel and ordinances?

A Church is an association of Christians following Christ.

Such an association has the power to excommunicate, because it is a Church; or, in the instance of persons alluding to their own Church, it is “the Church.”

But here are some considerations which must be carefully noticed. A great error, with regard to stringent or absolute congregationalism, is committed right here.

It does not follow from what has been said, that every congregation, or association of persons professing to be Christians, has the absolute power, or right rather, of excommunication. It has the power to excommunicate, or to perform any other Church action, only in so far as Christ is present and sanctions what is done. Hence the necessity that Churches be extremely careful, and see that what they do has the approval of Heaven.

Whatsoever they bind or loose, with the presence and approval of Christ, shall be bound or loosed in heaven. That is to say, whatever Christ approves or sanctions on earth he will recognize in heaven.

There is, however, no infallibility in the Church. Christians are fallible men. Fallibility is liability to err.

For what reason are men endowed with judgment and discretion, and reasoning and concluding powers? To enable them to guard, as well as may be, against the errors incident to fallibility.

There is, therefore, to say the very least, as much necessity for the exercise of judgment and sound discretion in the Church as out of it. Christ is present and approves of some Church actions; not, however, because it is the action of a “true” Church, but because the action was right.

It will not do, therefore, to say that because a certain company of Christians are a Church, that therefore they have the right of excommunication, or of performing any other action of government; and hence all they have to do in any given case is to take up the question and decide it; for they may decide it wrong. Because Christ approves some of their actions, it does not necessarily follow that he approves all. All human actions are liable to be wrong, because men are fallible.

If it is said in the Bible that Christ will be with two or three disciples met in his name, there are some other things also in the Bible.

The question which arose at Antioch respecting the necessity of circumcision, was a question of excommunication; or, at least, it was equivalent thereto. It was the question whether uncircumcised persons could be members of the Church. Now, they did not say—as the modern stringent Congregational doctrine is—We are a valid Church: we are a company of Christians, following Christ; and as such we are fully competent to decide all Church questions for ourselves: let us decide this question, and exclude, or include, these uncircumcised persons. They remembered that there was such a thing as prudence, carefulness, sober discretion, in the world, as well as Christianity; and that Christianity did not make men, either collectively or individually, infallible. And hence, “they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question.”

Nothing can be right, performed by any Church, or by any kind of a Church, that ever existed upon earth, that is hasty, imprudent, careless, or indiscreet.

Hence it is not right, and therefore it is not legal, for a Church—two or three—a company of Christians, because they are a valid Church, to take up, in and of themselves,

any and every question, and decide it finally; a question involving the deepest interests of a person, or several persons, perhaps, when they have the opportunity of associating themselves, either generally or specially, for the occasion, with other Churches, or with more wise, discreet, and experienced Christians.

So that Congregationalism, if Congregationalism could be defined, precisely what it is and what it is not, does not by any means follow of necessity from the doctrine, that two or three, or more, Christians in association, with Christ's presence, are truly and validly a Church. If the doctrine be true, that a congregation is a Church, with all the legal powers necessarily pertaining to a Church of Christ, it does by no means follow that ecclesiastical jurisprudence must be conducted strictly and exclusively upon the Congregational plan; because FEDERATION may be both legal and discreet.

Its legality depends upon the question whether it is forbidden in the Scriptures; and the soundness of the policy may be ascertained, partly by experience and partly by the reason of the thing, respecting the soundness and stability of jurisprudence on the one hand, and social good order and prosperity on the other.

We are bound, by Scripture precept, to HEAR THE CHURCH; but it does not therefore follow that we must heed and be instructed exclusively by a single congregation. If the Church can do no better—if federation be impracticable, in any given circumstances—if conference with a Church at Jerusalem, through Paul and Barnabas, be impracticable—then we must do the best we can, and act with less reliable counsel; but the *best* course that can be pursued is best. Christ is with the Church to give it validity, and to enstamp upon it its true and proper character, but not to give it infallibility.

The terms “legal” and “illegal,” “valid” and “invalid,” are not applicable to the Church, or to a Church in the sense and in the way in which they are applicable to other human associations. The legality or validity of a Church depends, not upon some things which have been done or said, the manner in which some particular officer in the Church came to be an officer, or the like; but upon the presence or absence of Christ. And the presence or absence of Christ depends upon another question—whether the gathering together be or be not in the name of Christ; or, in other words, whether the persons be or be not Christians following Christ.

The Church is not to be put on a par with associations of human invention. The Church is not humanly arranged or humanly conceived. It has no human constitution and laws to be complied with; consequently, it has no human tests by which its validity may be tried. It is not a thing set up, with positive laws or otherwise, in opposition to other institutions in the world; or to be regarded in contradistinction with something else that is not a Church. The law of God respecting mankind is, that they shall live and believe so and so. This Divine law has not respect to a few persons—to Christians—to some persons as a part of the world: it is the law of God respecting *mankind*.

There *ought* to be in the world, among men, nothing but the Church. The whole world ought to be the Church; and if this be not the case to-day, it is not because of any thing in the law of God respecting the Church, but because men violate the laws of God respecting the Church. The laws of God respecting the Church are the laws of God, more properly speaking, respecting the world. The whole world is—is supposed to be, or ought to be—the Church.

The only thing which constitutes men a Church is, not any particular actions or conduct performed in pursuance of any

positive laws, but merely good conduct, morally and religiously considered. Men who do not violate God's laws, are a Church. The Church is not a mere voluntary association which men may or may not enter into. Men "must be saved;" or if they will not be, it is because of the prostitution of their moral powers, and their flagrant violations of God's law.

The Church, therefore, as contradistinguished from the world, is not, by any means, a mere positive thing which God has arranged and prescribed. It results as much from what God has prohibited as from what he has commanded. The Church, as a separate institution from the world, and contradistinguished therefrom, is not a thing which ought to be, but a thing which ought not to be. There ought to be no such separate institution. This distinction between Church and world is disallowed—is prohibited—in God's law, and is kept up only by transgression of God's will. A compliance with the commands of God would to-day, and for ever, annul all such distinction; and henceforth there would be no Church as contrasted with and distinguished from something else among men that is not the Church. There ought to be no such distinction.

To "hear the Church," then, is simply to do right—to hear the Bible—to cease to do evil, and learn to do well. The idea that the Church is a mere "positive institution," that is, an institution with positive laws, like a bank, a railroad company, or college, takes away from it the notion that it is the visible embodiment of a universal religion.

When Jesus Christ gave commands to his disciples, he recognized the *fact* that, as believers, they were contradistinguished from the other part of the world; but he did not sanction or justify any such division of people. The thing is still a fact, but it is not right: it ought not to be, because all men should obey and follow Christ. So long as the wicked-

ness of men keeps this fact in existence—which time may Heaven speedily bring to an end!—the Church must be spoken of as a separate thing from the world. Let men leave off sinning, and then the pale of the Church is the boundary of mankind. This will probably be at the period of the ushering in of the world's adult condition.

CHAPTER III.

OF CHURCH OFFICERS OR RULERS.

WE have seen that the form of government of the first Christian Churches was accidental; that it was not planned, prescribed, or arranged either by Christ or his apostles; but that the first Christians continued the same form of Church government they had all along been accustomed to before they became Christians. The only difference of any note, and in fact almost the only difference, between the governments of the synagogues and the Churches, in the days of the apostles, was that the latter had not the office of "ruler;" and this must needs be the case, for that was a civil office.

The first Churches were, in a modified and restricted sense, congregational. They could not, in the nature of the case, be any thing else. They were just as congregational as the synagogues were, for they were synagogues. To take and look at a single instance—it is the very same synagogue now that it was a year ago; and the only new thing that has occurred in it is, that now the preacher preaches a different *doctrine* from what he or his predecessor did formerly.

But when it is said that the first Churches were congregational, it is not intended to be meant that each Church respectively managed all its affairs without supervision, advice, or control from sister Churches. The lines of jurisdiction were by no means tightly drawn, nor were the landmarks of

division carefully planted and strictly observed. Judicial authority was by no means strictly meted out, claimed, yielded, and exercised.

When the Churches found themselves actually, though informally, separated from the prevailing synagogue government to which they had been all along accustomed, the individual Churches found it necessary to bring themselves closer together than formerly; but it was long before this was done in a strictly legal and formal manner.

The apostles lived, some of them, and exercised a very general jurisdiction over the Churches, for about half a century; but even this supervision was not strictly judicial. The Churches relied upon their counsel and advice when it could be obtained; but this control was informal and moral, rather than strictly legal.

The early Churches were congregational in the sense that they were not strictly confederate.

The "council," as it is oftentimes called, which was held at Jerusalem with regard to the question of circumcision, was not a *council* in any strictly legal sense of that term. It was rather the meeting of a Church. Nor was it exclusively a meeting of a Church; for "Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them" from Antioch, mingled with "the apostles and elders," and with "all the brethren," and "the whole multitude," and "the whole Church," at Jerusalem, in their deliberations.

Federation and non-federation is the natural and proper distinction between Churches which are and which are not congregational. But federation did not—could not, in the circumstances of the case—come about at once as an act of specific legislation.

The government was the most easy, simple, and plain imaginable. In fact, they had but little *government*. They needed but little. The absorbing question with them was

religion, the great and important truths which Christ had taught. They thought or cared exceedingly little about government. When a question of doctrine or of alleged immorality pressed upon their notice, the Church and ministers would get together and settle it. The apostles would of course give their advice and counsel when at hand. The "angel," as he was first called, or bishop, as he afterward came to be called among the disciples, was of course the most prominent man among them, in the absence of an apostle. The responsibilities of government, or of control, in their affairs, would naturally fall chiefly upon him without any seeking on his part. He was assisted in what he did by the Church, or by such portions of it as were necessary.

Thus affairs moved on in a way the most simple and smooth imaginable, so far as concerned the government of their Churches. The great matters of interest with them were, first, religion; and secondly, the dangers, and persecutions, and abuses to which they were exposed from their unbelieving brethren and the Romans. Church government could reach neither of these but partially.

The Saviour had taught them nothing as to any particular form of Church government. That was an open question, left to be regulated from time to time as expediency and sound discretion would dictate.

A little reflection will teach any one that this is the case, and must needs have been the condition of things. The attributes of government—either the government of a Church, a state, a school, or family—are, Legislative, Judiciary, and Executive. Or, first, the making of laws; second, the determination of questions arising under these laws; and, third, the execution or enforcement of any judgment or decree which may be so made.

Now, the *organization* of the government of a Church, as of any thing else, means the placing of these attributes of

government in the hands of such and such officers, with such and such powers and duties, in contradistinction to the placing of them in the hands of different officers, by a different arrangement, and with duties prescribed otherwise.

And now, it is held that the early Christians could not fix this distribution of the attributes of government among specified and fixed officers for the Christian Church, in all time to come. For, as has been already intimated, a Church government arranged in the best way to meet the circumstances and condition of the Christians at that time in Palestine, could not, in the very nature of the case, be best suited to the circumstances and condition of Christians in *all possible* cases to the end of time. This point will be enlarged upon and explained more fully in a more appropriate place. It is enough for us to know, however, that the New Testament contains no prescription, or rule, or intimation even, with regard to any particular *form* of Church government; though it recognizes or supposes the existence of such government, and presumes the participation of ministers in its exercise. In fact, the very idea of a ministry, as above intimated, or pastorate, supposes oversight; and that, in a subordinate sense, is government.

The Churches in the days of the apostles, and for two hundred years afterwards, were governed, exclusively of the government of the apostles, by bishops and presbyters in conjunction with the people, in the following manner :

As Churches sprang up in different places, a bishop was appointed or elected to watch over them, to teach, instruct, and minister to them in holy things. Frequently these bishops were appointed by an apostle, if he chanced to be mainly instrumental in the origination of the Church; but this was never, or, at least, not usually done without the consent of the brethren composing the Church.

These ministers were called, indifferently, bishops, presby-

ters, or elders. In Titus i. 5, 7, the same persons are called, at one time elders, and at another, bishops. Other passages prove the same point beyond question.

Christianity was *new* in those days; and the people who embraced its faith, whether Jews or Gentiles, were exceedingly ignorant of its tenets, and of their duty as Christians. They had no Bibles nor other books which taught Christian principles and precepts, as was the case in after years. Converts in many places were numerous, and the disciples were persecuted from place to place, and the Churches subject to constant change and confusion in external matters.

It is easy to conceive, therefore, that in most places, if not in all, more than one minister would be necessary to a Church; and that the disruption to which the Churches were subject, would cause sometimes the union of two or more into one, and sometimes the dividing of one into several, as the disciples would increase, so that there could not be regularly one minister to a Church even if it were desirable. In fact, this has never been the case up to the present day.

There were then, oftentimes, if not generally or uniformly, more than one of these presbyters or bishops to a Church. Generally, no doubt, several were both useful and desirable. Of course, good order would require that one of these bishops should be the chief pastor of the congregation, or president of the body of presbyters or bishops. Of course, then, he thus becomes superior to them in this respect. He is the leading, responsible, and most prominent minister. The others support and assist him. He is not, however, superior to the other bishops as an ecclesiastic. He is only superior as an officer. This is so far from being a strange arrangement, difficult to be understood and appreciated, that it continues to be the case in most if not in all the Churches to the present day. Wherever we find more than one minis-

ter in a Church, one is the pastor, and of course the others, one or more, are inferior to him in respect to the duty and office of pastor.

Lord Chancellor King remarks, (*Primitive Church*, p. 32,) that, "a bishop having but one parish under his jurisdiction, could extend his government no farther than one single congregation, because a single congregation and a parish were all one."

Again, page 43: "How long it was before these dioceses swelled into several congregations is not my business to determine, since it happened not within my prescribed time"—three hundred years. Lord King confined his examinations to the period of three hundred years after Christ.

It might here be remarked, parenthetically, that Lord King, High Chancellor of England, was one of the ripest scholars and best oriental linguists that England ever produced. He wrote his "*Primitive Church*" at an early age, and published it about one hundred and fifty years ago. It required an amount of labor and research, no less than a careful examination of every thing of an ecclesiastical character which was written in the early ages. It is almost exclusively a book of collated and deducted facts, and is, beyond comparison, the ablest work of the kind extant.

"Now," he remarks, "the definition of a presbyter may be this: A person in holy orders, having thereby an inherent right to perform the whole office of a bishop; but being possessed of no place or parish, not actually discharging it without the permission and consent of the bishop of a place or parish."—*Primitive Church*, p. 61.

Lord King then proceeds to show, from the writers of that day, that presbyters who were not bishops, that is, who had not the pastoral oversight, had the right to discharge all the duties of a bishop, with this restriction, however, that he could not perform these duties without the consent or direc-

tion of the presiding elder or bishop. A number of authorities of that day are quoted.

These bishops were elected by the Churches, and were installed into office, or ordained, by the other ministers of the Church, who, collectively, were usually called the presbytery. Eusebius says, in speaking of Fabianus, the successor of Anteros, bishop of Rome, "All the people met together in the Church to choose a successor." He also says Alexander was chosen bishop of the Church at Jerusalem by the "choice of the members of that Church."—Primitive Church, p. 55.

There is one thing, however, which ought to be borne in mind, and which seems strangely to have escaped the notice of most persons. The information which has come down to us respecting the management of the early Churches, refers almost, if not quite, entirely to those in the principal cities, and only a very few of them. Christianity, even in the first century, became spread over a considerable part of the world. It was found in many countries of Asia, Africa, and even in Europe. In that age, the transmission of intelligence from place to place was slow, uncertain, and expensive. Hence there could be but little concert among Churches distant from each other, respecting the details of mere external matters, such as forms of government, modes, and manners. The leading, absorbing matter of faith in Christ was the only thing necessary to be kept pure and uniform; and we know that even this was by no means always done. We must conclude, therefore—remembering, too, the unsettled and distracted condition of the Church, arising from persecution and civil opposition—these external customs must have varied considerably in different places, and among different people, of different countries, with different laws, manners, and customs. There could have been no entire uniformity in Church government over the world. This was never entirely the case

even under the iron despotism of popish rule in darker and more gloomy ages. It never was the case at any time in the Church's history.

Mosheim says: "The rulers of the Church were called either *presbyters*, or *bishops*, which two titles are in the New Testament undoubtedly applied to the same order of men. These were persons of eminent gravity, and such as had distinguished themselves by their superior sanctity and merit. Their particular functions were not always the same; for, while some of them confined their labors to the instruction of the people, others contributed in different ways to the edification of the Church."—*Ecc. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 88.

The same distinguished author, after noticing the appointment of deacons, etc., continues to remark:

"Such was the constitution of the Christian Church in its infancy, when its assemblies were neither numerous nor splendid. Three or four presbyters, men of remarkable piety and wisdom, ruled these small congregations in perfect harmony; nor did they stand in need of any president or superior to maintain concord and order where no dissensions were known. But the number of the presbyters and deacons increasing with that of the Churches, and the sacred work of the ministry growing more weighty and painful, by a number of additional duties, these new circumstances required new regulations. It was then judged necessary that one man of distinguished gravity and wisdom should preside in the council of the presbyters, in order to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks, and to be a centre of union to the whole society. This person was at first styled the *angel* of the Church to which he belonged, but was afterwards distinguished by the name of *bishop*, or inspector; a name borrowed from the Greek language, and expressing the principal part of the episcopal function, which was to inspect into and superintend the affairs of the Church. It is highly probable

that the Church of Jerusalem, grown considerably numerous, and deprived of the ministry of the apostles, who were gone to instruct other nations, was the first which chose a president or bishop. And it is no less probable that the other Churches followed by degrees such a respectable example.

“Let none, however, confound the bishops of this primitive and golden period of the Church with those of whom we read in the following ages. For though they were both distinguished by the same name, yet they differed extremely, and that in many respects. A bishop during the first and second century was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, which at that time was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house. In this assembly he acted not so much with the authority of a master as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful servant. He instructed the people, performed the several parts of Divine worship, attended the sick, and inspected into the circumstances and supplies of the poor. He charged, indeed, the presbyters with the performance of those duties and services which the multiplicity of his engagements rendered impossible for him to fulfil; but had not the power to decide or enact any thing without the consent of the presbyters and people. And, though the episcopal office was both laborious and singularly dangerous, yet its revenues were extremely small, since the Church had no certain income, but depended on the gifts or *oblations* of the multitude, which were, no doubt, inconsiderable, and were, moreover, to be divided between the bishops, presbyters, deacons, and poor.

“The power and jurisdiction of the bishops were not long confined to these narrow limits, but soon extended themselves, and that by the following means: The bishops who lived in the cities, had, either by their own ministry or that of their presbyters, erected new churches in the neighboring towns and villages. These churches, continuing under the inspec-

tion and ministry of the bishops by whose labors and counsels they had been engaged to embrace the gospel, grew imperceptibly into ecclesiastical provinces, which the Greeks afterwards called *dioceses*. But as the bishop of the city could not extend his labors and inspection to all these churches in the country and in the villages, so he appointed certain suffragans or deputies to govern and instruct these new societies; and they were distinguished by the name of *chorepiscopi*, i. e., country bishops. This order held the middle rank between bishops and presbyters, being inferior to the former and superior to the latter.

“The churches, in these ancient times, were entirely independent; none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own rulers and its own laws. For though the churches founded by the apostles had this particular deference shown them, that they were consulted in difficult and doubtful cases, yet they had no judicial authority, no sort of supremacy over others, nor the least right to enact laws for them. Nothing, on the contrary, is more evident than the perfect equality that reigned among the primitive Churches; nor does there even appear, in this first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches from which *councils* and metropolitans derive their origin. It was only in the second century that the custom of holding councils commenced in Greece, from whence it soon spread through the other provinces.”—*Ecc. Hist.*, vol. i., pp. 91, 92.

The only question in issue respecting Church officers and rulers, is respecting the distribution of the several attributes of government among certain functionaries, in this, that, or the other manner. There is no dispute respecting the duties of pastor, as such. The only question is, whether the Divine law prescribes that such and such attributes of *government* shall be exercised by a pastor, or by any other

particular church officer or officers. And this is the same as to inquire if any, and, if any, what form of Church government is prescribed in the Scriptures.

The New Testament is not very large. Any man may inquire into it and see for himself. The simple truth is, that there is not in this book one word respecting any particular form of Church government. There is not a word which lodges the attributes of government, or any one of them, in any particular hands.

The idea, however, of pastoral care and oversight is inseparable from the idea of government in an unadjusted form, and in a subordinate sense. It does not, however, imply the exercise of authority in the following particulars, which certainly make up most of what we call Church government :

1. The authority of a pastor does not necessarily give him the right to determine whether a particular person shall or shall not be admitted into the Church.

2. It does not necessarily allow him to exclude a person from the Church.

3. Nor does it necessarily invest him with authority to organize a court of judicature to try offences.

4. Nor to determine when, where, or how churches shall be built.

5. Nor to participate in the legal ownership of Church property.

6. Nor to determine when, where, how, or how frequently the Lord's Supper shall be administered.

7. Nor to determine whether a new Church shall be organized, or whether an existing Church shall be dissolved, and its members merged in other Churches.

8. Nor to raise money, nor to disburse it, nor to determine the amount of his own salary, or that of other ministers.

The powers which necessarily inhere in the pastorate are those which, in their nature, belong to the giving of public

and private instruction, exhortation, and admonition in morals and religion. Convenience, but nothing else, oftentimes, however, places other powers in his hands. These natural attributes of the pastorate are, in the Scriptures, plainly lodged in the hands of the minister. All other powers pertaining to government are lodged in the sound discretion of pious men, to be regulated in different ages, and different countries, and different circumstances, in the way that will best answer the ends of government.

This is not only the written doctrine in the Scriptures, but it is the practical doctrine everywhere out of them. No two Churches in different countries, times, and circumstances, are ever governed precisely alike.

It ought to be remarked, too, that far less *authority* is needful in the government of a Church than in that of almost any thing else: far less than in governing a family or school; and as to the government of a state, there is almost no comparison. The Scriptures leave very little to do in the way of *ecclesiastical authority*; but ambitious men have made a great and unnecessary ado about it in the world. The rule of Churches, though it may not be entirely dispensed with, ought to be but very slightly felt and but very slightly exercised.

Organization supposes government. The ideas are inseparable. But different parties in religion place the functions of control here or there, to suit their own preconceived notions, and of course their arguments must be made accordingly.

The advocates of an essential, practical democratic government for the Church quote Matt. xxiii. 8-10: "Be ye not called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ." Also in Matt. xx. 25-27, it is said: "But Jesus called them unto him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles

exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

These passages, it is contended, "recognize the essential equality of Christians under the rule of Christ, their subjection to him alone as their Lord and Master, and to God alone as their Father, and entirely exclude any spiritual lordship of the apostles or any one of them over the Church."—Sawyer's *Organic Christianity*, page 22.

If the terms "spiritual lordship" in the above passage are intended to mean supervision or control in spiritual matters, which they must mean if they mean any thing, then we have a flat denial that there is rightly and properly, or can be in the Church upon earth, any human government, that is, any government exercised by human persons. There can be no human Church officers, or discipline, or supervision; but every man is responsible directly and only to Christ. And then, there being no government in the exercise of which human persons participate or officiate, there can be no organization of human persons, and, consequently, no Church composed of human persons.

On the contrary, the advocates of a "strong government," as it perhaps might be called, who contend that the functions of control inhere by Divine law in the ministers of the Church exclusively, find nothing in the New Testament on the subject, but such passages as the following: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." 1 Pet. v. 2. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts xx. 28. "The apostles and elders came together for to consider this matter." Acts xv. 6.

Between these two extremes there is a middle ground, that harmonizes not only with one or two passages, selected apparently with the view to sustain a party, but with all that is found in the Scriptures. By what logical argument can it be contended that the above passages, from 1 Peter and from Acts, place the functions of control so exclusively in the hands of ministers, as to forbid the participation of lay authority entirely? In view and in full recognition of them, may not a Church govern itself in all matters which do not naturally pertain to pastoral care? May not a minister "*feed*" a "*flock*," and be a spiritual overseer over it, which manages, at the same time, numberless matters pertaining to external discipline and incidental arrangement, by means of lay or clerical officers, legislative, judicial, or executive? Because the nature of the ministerial office is inseparable from *some* control in relation to *some* things, does it necessarily follow that all ecclesiastical authority resides in the minister?

These two extremes must be avoided. The Scriptures lie between them.

There is one, and perhaps but one, matter pertaining to ecclesiastical discipline which seems naturally to place itself in the hands of ministers exclusively. I mean the trial of ministers themselves. Mr. Watson very properly remarks on this subject :

"It can scarcely happen that a minister should be under accusation, except in some very particular cases, but that from his former influence, at least with a part of the people, some faction would be found to support him. In proportion to the ardor of this feeling, the other party would be excited to undue severity and bitterness."—Institutes, page 616.

The trial of a minister by his people, with whom he lives and to whom he constantly ministers, could scarcely be expected to be a fair trial. There is not a more wholesome principle in human jurisprudence than this : that the triers of

any man, for any offence, should be selected, as far as practicable, from beyond the sphere of his influence: so that any prejudices he may have created, either for or against himself, may be entirely excluded from the adjudication.

This principle is held inviolate in human jurisprudence, almost universally, in civilized society. The principle itself is based in man's nature and circumstances. It is scarcely supposable that it could be violated by the Author of this nature himself. Moreover, the nature of the ministerial office seems to point to ministers themselves, as the most suitable persons to try such offences.

It is not, I believe, pretended by any that there are any particular directions in the word of God on this point. It was, it seems, presumed, with many other matters, that this could be safely lodged in the sound discretion of holy men.

CHAPTER IV.

NUMBER OF ORDERS IN THE MINISTRY.

THE nature of the *constitution* of the Church, and that of its ordinary *laws*, will be briefly explained in the next chapter. It may, however, perhaps, be well here to remark, that the constitution embraces those things which God himself has established as necessary, absolutely, to the Church's *existence*.

The *laws* are rules made by men, for the internal government of the Church, and which it is not absolutely necessary should always be the same, but may be varied with varying circumstances, in or out of the Church. To vary from the constitution is to leave the track on which God placed the Church.

There are four different theories with regard to ministerial orders in the Church, which will be noticed in order.

FIRST, It is held that there are constitutionally *three orders* in the ministry.

This is argued from the supposed fact that there were three orders in the Jewish priesthood. If this were true, it by no means proves that there must be three orders in the Christian ministry.

Religion, previous to the Saviour, was confessedly partial, incomplete, and cumbersome. It was a "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-

master." Gal. iii. 24, 25. The Jewish dispensation of grace occupied the same place in religion that the spelling-book does in science and literature.

An argument that will prove that there must be three orders in the ministry, because there were a like number in the priesthood, will of course prove that there must be conformity to that system in many other respects. As, for instance, there must be the same ritual observances, the same temple service, and, in a word, that the system of Judaism must continue, and Christianity be dispensed with; or, at most, that the latter is but a partial scheme superadded to the former. There can, in the nature of the case, be but two reasons given why any thing in the Jewish economy of religion should be continued in the present. First, that it is a thing naturally essential in all true religion; or, second, that it has for its support the express and unmistakable command of God.

Moreover, it is by no means conceded that there were three orders in the Jewish priesthood. Properly considered, there was but one order. The Levites could scarcely be called an order of priesthood. They were more properly the servants of the priests.

"Their principal office was to wait upon the priests, and be assisting to them in the service of the tabernacle and temple, so that they were properly the ministers and servants of the priests, and obliged to obey their orders."—Horne's Introduction, vol. ii., page 111.

The high-priest could not be said to be an *order* of priesthood, for there could be but one at a time. An *order* of persons cannot be confined to one single person. It cannot be said that one minister is an order of ministers. The term order is, at best, of very ambiguous and indefinite meaning; but this use of it would require it to serve almost any purpose.

The office of high-priest is peculiar to a theocracy. He is both a civil and a religious king.

Three orders in the ministry is further attempted to be proved from the alleged fact that there were three orders of ministers in the days of the apostles. The apostles, it is said, constituted one order, the presbyters, bishops, or elders, were the second, and the deacons were the third.

This, however, proves too much. For the same scriptures that prove *three* orders will, in the same sense, prove that there were *four*, or *five*, or *six* orders.

If the number of orders in the ministry is determined by the number of kinds, or classes, of ministerial labor performed by different ministers, then let us see—

“And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” Eph. iv. 11. Here is express mention of five different kinds of ministerial labor, in which is not mentioned either the deacon or the deaconess. So that if ministerial *order* is to be reckoned in this way, we have at least six or seven orders.

SECOND. It is set forth in the second place, that entire *parity* in the ministry is the constitutional law of the Christian Church.

To this it is objected, that it lacks both of the only two modes of determining a constitutional provision by which it may be distinguished from a prudential regulation. First, it is not naturally necessary, in and of itself, in order to the worship of God; and, secondly, it is not expressly commanded. Nothing in the Church can be *constitutional* that does not bear one of these two marks.

Again, the doctrine is impracticable. No Church can avoid—at least, no Church has ever avoided—its practical infringement every day. No Church can continue to exist without the exercise of legislative, judicial, and executive functions. And nothing is more apparent than the necessity of conferring

special authority on certain ministers : that of presidency, for instance, or power to execute laws, in order to the exercise of these functions. And the moment authority is conferred upon one man, which all do not possess—whether for a day, a single act, a week, or a year, or a lifetime, the principle is the same—the parity is destroyed.

It is not inquired in what way the principle of ministerial parity may or may not properly be disturbed : whether by the Church itself, or its ministers among themselves, or for what purpose, or on what occasions. Those who contend for *constitutional parity* must be held to their position.

Whether expediency may or may not dictate the observance of a general parity among ministers, to be disturbed only once a year, or more or less frequently, and to last only for short periods, is quite another question. This question, however, pertains to the human laws of the Church, and not to its Divine constitution.

THIRD. A third hypothesis is, that there are, constitutionally, *two orders* in the ministry : the presbyterate and the deaconry. That the episcopate is only an *office* in the presbyterate, and may or may not be used, as the Church may determine by its own laws.

If that is the doctrine, it does not appear to me entirely free from objection. I am aware that men oftentimes *seem* to differ from the mere use of terms in different senses, or by understanding them with complexional variations. Let us see.

If God has enacted, in the constitution of the Church, that there *must be two orders* in the ministry, then there cannot be a Church without two orders in the ministry. There must be *two*, and only two.

This is pretty high ground, and must be either maintained or abandoned. Its maintenance requires the ostracism of all Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, and, in fact, a very

large proportion of all the so-called Churches and Christians that have ever existed.

Can this be done on any ground, seeing they have, beyond all question, oftentimes given the best proofs of the presence and favor of God in the conversion of sinners among them? The reader is referred to the remarks in the chapter on "Hear the Church," and to the Part of the present work on "Ecclesiastical Exclusiveness," for a further elucidation of this particular point.

Again: it is certain the Church existed for a time without deacons: how long, we do not know precisely. But when they were appointed, it is clearly stated that it was done as an incidental measure, because of certain exigences then present, and not as a matter essentially pertaining to the Church's existence.

See Acts vi. 1: "In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude," etc. And the deacons were selected and ordained.

The *reasons* for the appointment are specifically set forth. First: the largeness of the Church. Second: the murmuring of the Grecian, or Hellenistic, or foreign portion of the Church. This point will be more particularly enlarged on in its appropriate chapter.

The question is not whether the deaconry is or is not an order in the ministry; but it is—just at this point—whether to dispense with it, as an order of ministry, necessarily involves the forfeiture of the Church's charter which she received from God. It is whether a Church *can be* a Church without the deaconry as an order of ministry.

And we also state the objection mentioned above as a bar to the correctness of the *first* and *second* hypotheses, viz.: That

two orders in the ministry are neither naturally necessary to the worship of God and the existence of a Church, nor are they set forth in the New Testament as an essential ingredient in the Church's composition.

When we lay down any thing as essentially necessary to the Church's existence, we must prepare ourselves to show that in its absence the Church cannot exist. There are few such things.

FOURTH. The only remaining doctrine which I propose to notice here, on this point, is, that God established the Church in two general departments, viz. : The ministry and the laity—these two divisions being essential, and their relation answering generally to that of a shepherd and his flock. But that any orders, or offices, or division of duties in the ministry, may be varied by circumstances, times, and places, and are not essential.

This relation to the shepherd and flock is only general, very general, in its nature, for there are but few points of real analogy in the case.

There has been a *Church* with a *ministry* since the call of Abraham at least. In fact, more properly speaking, there has been a Church and a ministry since the call of Adam, under the covenant of grace, under the promise of a Saviour. This ministry has existed under a variety of forms, and with some variety as to its functions.

Of the ministry in the antediluvian period, we know but little. So far as we know, it appears to have been very general in its character.

The Noahic covenant of grace may be regarded as God's second dispensation to men. Here the ministry, as contradistinguished from the laity, appears to have acquired a little more definiteness in its peculiar relation, though still we are informed but very little indeed on the subject.

The Abrahamic covenant may be regarded as the third dis-

pensation. I use the word *dispensation*, not because it is specifically appropriate, but for lack of a better, in the lameness of human language. In this dispensation the ministry is more specifically and prominently developed in the Scriptures; and it may be regarded as the origin of the Church proper. The condition of the world still required that this dispensation should be but partial and incomplete, as a system of recovering grace for mankind. Its ministry, like those which preceded it, was still in the nature of a *priesthood*. Judaism answered its end in the economy of God's providence. Its *ministry*, as contradistinguished from the laity, corresponded to the kind of worship required, and it was varied and arranged accordingly.

When the world was ready, the full development of the Divine plan was ushered in, and the Church was varied and moulded to correspond to these new circumstances. We still see in it that which has always characterized it—its *ministry* and its *laity*. These appear to be essential to the very notion of a Church.

In the Jewish economy, some considered that the service of the temple was essential to the existence of the Church: that there must be a high-priest, and his yearly services. But this was a mistake. When the Jews were carried captive to Babylon, they had neither temple nor high-priest; but they continued to worship God acceptably, under a synagogue system, which varied materially from the temple service. The temple service was an institution of that dispensation, but was not in the nature of an indispensable or constitutional provision.

The Christian dispensation differs from the former ones in this, that it is full, complete, and perfect, as a system; and is so arranged as to adapt itself to all possible states and conditions of mankind. If we go, in our notions of constitutional adjustment, beyond the provision of a *ministry*, and suppose

that there must be some particular *orders*, or *offices*, in the ministry, as essentially necessary to the Church's existence, are we not likely to come in contact with some other things which are essential to the Church's catholicity?

Are we right sure that it is always *possible* for every Church to comply with this requisition of two orders, or even to have two ministers? If we can find such a case, then one of two things is inevitable: either the two orders are not necessary to the Church's existence, or the system is not adapted to mankind in *all possible* conditions. And that such cases are not only possible, but are really abundant, will be, it is believed, very clearly set forth in a subsequent chapter, wherein it will be attempted to be shown that no form of Church government *can be* exclusively the one legal form.

What do we understand ourselves to mean, when we say that a Church is not a Church without the two orders of presbyter and deacon? We surely do not allude to a confederate Church. A confederate Church is only a *confederation* of a hundred or a thousand churches. The idea of validity or invalidity cannot attach to the *confederation*. Surely there is nothing constitutional or unconstitutional in this. It can only attach to the churches themselves. Confederation, like a hundred things in all churches, is, beyond all question, a prudential arrangement. To say that a confederate Church *must* have two orders in its ministry, presupposes that confederation is a constitutional provision, which cannot for a moment be pretended. It might as well be said that a missionary society, or a Bible society, or a tract society, or itinerancy, or the division of ministerial labor into circuits and stations, or the holding of annual conferences or synods, belongs essentially to the constitution of the Church. When we speak of constitutional provisions, we must do so, and not fly off on prudential provisions.

If a Church *must have* two orders in its ministry, the elders and deacons, how can this be in the case of *two or three met together in the name of the Saviour*? This is, beyond all question, a constitutional Church. For what marks can be conceived of, as defining the validity of a Church, with more certainty than those which Christ has himself expressly named, viz., that the association be in *his name*, and that it have his actual presence? Here is a legal Church, beyond all question, and you might not be able to find in it the *two orders* in the ministry.

Moreover, what distinct idea do we form in the mind when we speak of different orders in the ministry? Do we mean that these gradations of rank are constitutional—necessarily inherent in the Christian Church? Or do we mean that the varied functions of ministerial labor, in its various departments, in prosecuting the business of a large Church, requires, in order to the most faithful and expeditious discharge, for the good of the Church, the oversight of some ministers, and labor corresponding to this oversight on the part of others? If so, then we cannot say it is constitutional; for, in the absence of these things, such oversight may be dispensed with.

Do the Scriptures inculcate the idea of constitutional superiority and inferiority in the Church *at all*? Are not all Christians, on the contrary, esteemed as brethren? And does not the very idea of authority in the ministry—rule on the one hand and submission on the other—mingle essentially with the idea of office?—of the discharge of varied duties, here and there, among ministers where there are a considerable number in one Church, or under one common jurisdiction? In what sense can one minister be of a *higher order* than another minister? We understand the notion of *rank* in an army, or in various worldly positions. The higher the rank,

the higher the pay. This is one important note of distinction. And another is, that in some instances inherent authority attaches to the higher and the still higher positions.

But these notions do not grow out of Christianity: on the contrary, they are rather repugnant to it, or grow out of a worldly spirit.

We conclude, then, that that in the Christian Church which has the appearance of *grades of order*, or *rank*, in the ministry, is a mere division of labor among several ministers, where the good of the whole requires that one should have the oversight of others. And as to the relation the deacon bears to the ministry proper, or to presbyters, that will be explained more fully in its appropriate chapter.

I see not the least objection, however, to the deaconry being called an *order* in the ministry, with the explanations herein given. The term is nothing: the thing only can interest sensible persons. The question is not, whether the deaconry is, or is not, *an order* in the ministry. The only practical question is, What relation does the deaconry sustain to the ministry of the Church? The *name* by which that relation is distinguished is nothing, so that we properly understand each other when we pronounce or use the name.

A dispute about words is an etymological or lexicographical argument.

The deacon, though not fully, is partially a minister of the gospel. That is, he is authorized to discharge some of the duties of a minister, but not all of them. He is the assistant of the minister; or, as the name imports, the attendant or helper of the minister. He has entered the vestibule leading to the ministry, and expects shortly to enter the ministry itself, by ordination thereto.

We conclude, then, that a Church, by its laws, either a single or confederate Church, may have as many orders in the

ministry as expediency may seem to require; that is, that the whole of its ministerial labors may be divided into as many classes as expediency may require, and that the assignment of these several classes of duties, or the class of ministers so assigned, may be called *orders*. The constitution only requires a ministry.

CHAPTER V.

OUR OBLIGATIONS TO OBSERVE PRIMITIVE OR APOSTOLIC CUSTOMS.

THERE are two classes of *principles* which belong essentially to a Church as a social organization, for they belong essentially to every organized government. They are the principles upon which are based its legal existence.

In the one class is found its *organic*, or fundamental laws, which may be called its constitution.

In the other is found its *policy*, or its prudential regulations, which may be called its rules, or its by-laws.

The former is made up of things essential to the existence of the government or association in its present character; that is, to change them, or any of them, is to change the character of the association or government. The latter is made up of mere policy, or prudential things which the members of the community may, from time to time, *choose* to do in carrying out the fundamental provisions.

Or, it may be said, the constitution, or set of fundamental principles, sets forth by prescription the character and end of the government; and the laws or measures of policy set forth the mode or the means agreed upon, from time to time, for the most successful attainment of this end.

When we apply these principles to the Church of Christ, it looks extremely simple and philosophic.

The constitution is the *Divine* law which enters into its

government. Its system, or principles of policy, are those human rules which men make, from time to time, for the more particular ends in view. Every thing is in strict subordination to the constitution, but every thing is not *in* the constitution.

Most of the unhappy disputes which the world has seen with regard to Church government, in all the variety of shape in which the controversies have been presented, have grown out of a misapprehension, in one way or another, with regard to the true discrimination between these two classes of laws. To mistake the one for the other leads directly into manifest error. The one is constitutional—essential : it is the words of God : in their very nature irrevocable, but of constant and universal application. The other forms those matters of change and occasional modification, which the multifarious changes of circumstance and condition in the world among men around us require. The one is properly *principle*, the other *policy*.

It is evident that the constitution of the Church is found written in the Bible ; but there are many, very many things written in the Bible that form no part of this constitution ; and, in discriminating between that which is and that which is not constitutional, we meet with much diversity of sentiment.

Theology is in its nature constitutional. Here nothing is done by man. We have only to understand the Bible.

But there are many things respecting the ministry—the duties and offices of the ministry, their rights, privileges, and powers—which are subject to a variety of modifications ; as also in regard to the duties of Christians in many particulars : many things pertaining to the Church may and must be varied according to varying circumstances.

Many persons inconsiderately seem to think that the acts of the apostles, and their fellow-Christians who lived and acted with them, form the Christian constitution. And hence, on any difference of sentiment respecting Christian duty, or

Church order or regulation, they consider that their views are triumphantly vindicated if they can find some actions in the apostolic Church which appear to correspond with the things they espouse.

And then the question arises, Are we obliged to do every thing that apostolic Christians did? Or, are ministers obliged to do every thing the apostles did, or that they directed or sanctioned among themselves and their associates in the ministry?

It will not do to say that the actions of early Christians are to be taken as our guide, for they, in many respects, were very poor Christians, so far as concerned the whole round of Christian faith and duty. The best, or most intelligent and philosophic Christians, as a general thing, that ever lived, live now. The Christians in the days of the apostles were for the most part, perhaps, very firm and zealous in regard to a very few prominent things of Christianity; but it would be strange indeed if uncultivated Jews and heathen, just initiated into Christianity, could be all at once patterns of faith and duty in all the variety of Christian character.

Nor was the conduct of the apostles themselves, by any means, free from objection. Besides several things intrinsically wrong in their conduct, we see at one time they were so ignorant of the nature of the gospel ministry, that most of them—probably all except one—with the whole Church at Jerusalem, were found uttering severe censures against that one for *preaching to the Gentiles*. See Acts xi. 1, 2, 3.

The theory of Christianity, as a system of religion, does not, by any means, become known by intuition. It has to be learned, for it is a science.

In most things the apostles, in their official conduct, acted under the restraints of inspiration. And in so far as this was the case, they reflected the Divine will. So that we may safely

conclude that *in like circumstances* our conduct should follow theirs.

The rule of common sense seems to be this : Leaving out a few acts, which evince either wickedness or weakness, their conduct is to be a general guide to us as far as a similarity of circumstances will seem to justify. In the same circumstances in which Paul was placed, it would be the duty of the minister to hire a house and preach in it two or three or more years, if he could do no better.

Such actions of the apostles, or of Christians in their day, as grew out of or were incident upon local or other accidental circumstances, are binding upon Christians only in like circumstances. And such actions as were abstractly Christian in their nature, and depended not upon incidental circumstances, or such as were in some solemn manner enstamped officially and authoritatively upon the escutcheon of the Church, are always binding upon Christians, as far as God's providence will reasonably admit.

Great stress appears to be placed by many Christians on the real or supposed usages or customs of Christians in the days of the apostles, with regard to Church government, the functions of these and those offices, and the powers claimed or exercised by these or those persons. And it is proper that we inquire how far these things are binding on Christians of the present day. By examining with care into this question, we will most probably find that we have superseded the necessity of determining several doubtful and perplexing questions with regard to these customs or usages.

It is contended by one school of controvertists that Christians in the days of the apostles practiced an *episcopal* form of Church government. And proof of this fact is considered as also establishing the principle that episcopacy is, by Divine law, the only proper form of Church government.

Again : the man who has been taught to favor, or who does

favor the Presbyterian form, seeks to establish his principles by proving that this form of government was practiced in the days of the apostles. And in like manner the Baptist vindicates his so-called republican form of government, by an appeal to the history of the Church, and the production of proof that the popular form was seen in apostolic days. The Congregationalist is a Congregationalist because he finds Congregationalism in those pure and primitive days. And the high Church formalist is a formalist because he finds forms adhered to and practiced in those times.

And so these debates are continued; but to what good end, is, perhaps, a question more easily asked than answered.

It may perhaps as well be stated here as elsewhere, that all these controvertists are generally right as to their facts. They all prove the facts they seek to prove; but are all wrong in the conclusions they draw from premises thus established.

There is no doubt that the Episcopalian can find the episcopal element in the Church; and it is quite as true that the Presbyterian can find his favorite principle of parity in the ministry. The Baptist can without doubt find his favorite republicanism. The Congregationalist will be at no loss to find congregational government; nor will the high Church formalist fail in his search for forms in the apostolic worship.

Let us now dwell here long enough to establish the fact set forth in this last paragraph. And if we do this, then what comes of all these controversies in question? Who is the successful and who the defeated partisan? And what is the "*true*" Church government?

Episcopacy is that form of government in which some ministers exercise an oversight and control over other ministers who are in the regular pastorate. Now, surely we may be relieved from the necessity of *proving* that this kind of government *was* practiced in the days of the apostles; for,

besides the fact being notorious and unquestionable, it is apparent, on the first glance at Christianity, that the machinery of the Church could not have been set agoing without first having some ministers specially instructed, and then being placed in a position of supervisory control over others.

Suppose there had been, from the beginning to the end of the Church's career, in the days of the apostles, a *perfect parity* among all ministers. Surely we need not stop here to prove that in this manner the Church could not have got under way at all, so as to promise success. Here, at least, is very plain necessity for the peculiar powers and prerogatives possessed by the apostles, as we have already seen.

But we are told there were other persons than the twelve apostles in their days who exercised control and supervisory care over churches and ministers. Unquestionably there was. For Paul sent Timothy and Titus to oversee and set in order the matters of Churches, to ordain ministers, and instruct them in their duties, etc., etc. And this is episcopacy. And so episcopacy was practiced by the Church in the days of the apostles.

But was not ministerial parity also recognized and practiced in those days?

What is ministerial parity? It is not *perfect equality* among ministers. This is naturally impossible. There is, and always was, a difference among ministers as to talent, learning, industry, force of character, resolution and enterprise, piety and zeal. And it is, and always was, the case, that the man who is foremost in any one or in most of these characteristics, exercises the most power in governing a Church, or in controlling and governing any thing else. This kind of power, therefore, great and unequal as it is, does not disturb the principle of ministerial parity.

And likewise, it is now, and was in the days of the apostles, a thing which would occasionally or frequently take place,

that assistance in advice and counsel would be needed by one or more Churches, from those ministers and Churches who were more wise and more experienced. This opens the way for instructions or directions, amounting practically to control, by one or more ministers, over other ministers.

The practical working of the Church could not, for any great length of time, especially in the circumstances in which the early Church was placed, avoid the necessity of assistance by Churches in somewhat distant or frontier portions, from the Church in the more established, experienced, and well-regulated places. We must remember that, in those days, Churches were established, and religion set agoing, in neighborhoods and among people who had but very recently even heard of Christianity. Imagine the condition of a Church whose pastor even is but just emerged from heathendom. He is zealous for the truth of Christ, but certainly very ill prepared to answer many important questions pertaining to Christianity. And there were considerable regions of country where the Churches were in this condition, partially or wholly.

Now, what would be more natural, or more desirable on all hands, than this: that the Churches of earlier establishment, longer and better instructed by the apostles, should send a minister—call him an evangelist if you please, or whatever name you choose—to and among these Churches, to see how they do, and afford them encouragement, counsel, and assistance? Among zealous Christians, in these circumstances, the thing would not, could not, be avoided.

And this minister certainly, naturally, yes, unavoidably, governs matters to a very great extent in these Churches. The words which he speaks, if he speak at all, are words of control. It is naturally and unavoidably understood, on all hands, that he goes among these Churches for the purpose of exercising the functions of control and government. He governs now to an extent he would not dream of doing

before. His authority is neither regal nor legal, in the sense of its being the result of legislation. But it is, nevertheless, real and powerful.

Did Paul send Timothy to the Church at Ephesus, and give him the instructions he did, for the purpose of installing him into certain *orders* of ministerial control and authority; or for the purpose of effecting certain reforms in certain matters in that Church? Surely there can be but one answer to this question. And could Paul regulate and reform these matters in the Church at Ephesus in any better or more convenient way than to give Timothy the instructions he did? Probably he could not. At least, it seems he chose this mode of effecting the end he had immediately in view.

But all such like occurrences as these before-named, which most certainly must have taken place, and did take place, in the days of the apostles, as well as in every age of the Church since, did not in the least interfere with the principle of ministerial parity.

Again, straightforward regularity and good order requires that, oftentimes, in deliberative meetings at least, one man should be selected for president. Here he is invested with control. His presidency may last a day, and extend over the persons there and then present, or it may be for two days, or a week, a month, or a year, and extend over persons or bodies not then personally present. If the selection be made regularly and voluntarily, by those, or for the most part those over whom the control is to be exercised, it is for the supposed mutual good of the whole, and does not in the slightest degree interfere with the principle of parity.

Imparity is when, by DIVINE LAW, some ministers are placed in *rank* above others; and which ministers exercise functions of control, which the ministers in the *lower rank* COULD NOT exercise under any circumstances.

That ministerial parity, with these explanations of what is

thereby meant, is to be found in the apostolic Church, is as certain as that any principle is capable of being settled by the Scriptures.

It is also easily established that republicanism was found as an element of government in the early Church.

The Church elected, or "appointed," the two candidates, Joseph and Matthias, from between whom the new apostle was selected. They elected the seven deacons. And in other instances, according to the best historians, the Church was several times known to decide questions of importance by popular voice.

And that the Churches in these times, as is herein-before explained, were congregational in their government, is beyond all question. By the term congregational, as a form of government, is meant, not that they actually did always govern, regulate, control, and manage all their affairs, in and of themselves, without any assistance or interference from or on the part of their brethren of other Churches. This would be a kind of government that was most likely never heard of. Certainly, unless it be in some portions thereof where, really and truly, government is nearly or quite dispensed with, it would be inconsistent with Christianity. Congregational government is where the congregation is not in a federate alliance with any other congregation. So that no other Church possesses, either of itself or in conjunction with others, the right, ministerially or executively, to interfere in the regulation of its affairs without the consent of such congregation. Or it may be said to be, where the congregation does, as a regular, general thing, manage its own affairs without foreign magisterial or coöperative assistance.

If it is not quite, it is very nearly impossible to suppose that Christianity could have commenced in the country and in the manner it did, under the vigilant hostility of an opposing civil government, under the sole auspices, humanly,

of eleven humble persecuted men, among a people very much given to idolatry and superstition—that Churches could be rapidly planted in different countries hundreds of miles distant, where travelling was done for the most part on foot, without the advantage of Bibles, books, or printing of any kind—with their ministers sometimes in prison and sometimes at the stake—it is, I say, under such circumstances, almost impossible to suppose that Christianity could commence and progress, and the government never be congregational. To suppose this is, at least, to suppose a perpetual miracle, which no man does suppose.

But what do all these things prove? Do they prove that any particular form of Church government is the imperative, unalterable law of Christianity? So far from it, they prove not only, as has been heretofore established, that the gospel does not prescribe any specific form of Church government for Christianity in all time, but they prove that the Church, in the days of the apostles, did not uniformly practice any particular form of government to the exclusion of all others.

In the days of the apostles, the several forms of Church government were not specifically defined, arranged, and understood as they are now. This could not have been the case, for the experience of the Church was not sufficient for such a precise classification of the elements of government as all men readily recognize now. They acted, in regard to government, from time to time, and in places here and in places there, as circumstances seemed to justify or render expedient.

They felt themselves to be on an equality, and recognized themselves among themselves as equals. The apostles were first and foremost in all things; not, however, because they had a higher *commission*, not because they had been placed in a higher *rank*, by authority, but because they had been highly and infallibly taught in the truths of religion—because they were witnesses of Christ's death and resurrection, be-

cause they were thus *qualified* to lead and teach others, and because the nature of the circumstances they were in, and the relation they bore to others, placed them in this front rank position. How could it be otherwise?

The Church was in circumstances then, that, in the nature of things, it never could be in at any subsequent time. It was commencing. The apostles were twelve missionaries in a heathen land, without any precisely defined plans of operation; without the experience of ministers, usually; without books or Bibles; without external or civil sympathy or protection; without a "parent Board" to look to, but with Jewish prejudices and disadvantageous customs, both in themselves and others, to contend with. They had to take the world raw and uncultivated, as they found it, and not in the prepared condition of even our foreign missions of the present day.

They had something to do besides sit down and arrange metaphysical classifications of the elements of government, and distribute and locate them here and there in nicely adjusted proportions among these, those, and the other incumbents or aspirants. This was not the work their Master placed in their hands, nor was it a work which seemed to present itself before them. They commenced vigorously and continued industriously to propagate *religion*, to promulgate and enforce the great truths which Christ had but so recently taught them.

Hence, in their ecclesiastical proceeding, we find somewhat of all the several elements of government usually applied to Churches, as men have since those days classified and defined these several elementary principles.

We see supervisory control over ministers and Churches; that is Episcopacy. We see, as to rank, an entire equality among ministers; that is Presbyterianism. We see congregations governing themselves independently; that is Congregationalism. We see ministers and laymen mingling together,

consulting, determining, and electing to office ; that is Republicanism.

They could not well have avoided this state of things if they had tried, which they certainly did not, for they saw nothing wrong in it. They could not well have done otherwise, however, for two reasons. 1. It was, as far as a change of circumstances would allow, about the way they had been accustomed to do in the Jewish synagogue. 2. The external circumstances seemed naturally to lead them in the course they pursued.

And hence we conclude that the acts and doings of the apostles and their fellow-Christians, even where we are able to trace them with certainty, do not form specific and determinate directions for Christians in all after-time, except it be in the following cases :

1. When such actions, in the nature of the thing, pertain to religious truth and conduct, in all possible human circumstances.

2. When they amount to specific command, coming from the Saviour through the apostles.

3. When such acts clearly amount to an institution of the gospel.

The apostles and early Christians observed and kept the day of Pentecost. Must we therefore do it? If we are strictly to follow their example, we must. But the plain truth is, the apostles and early Christians did many things in and about the affairs of the Church which were brought about by local circumstances, and they are therefore not binding upon Christians in after-time.

We have seen also, that the apostles, for some time at least, were members of Jewish synagogues. It is not therefore, however, necessary we should be.

So far as we know, it was the custom of the early Church to administer the Lord's Supper in the congregations every

Sabbath day. But this is not considered absolutely binding upon Christians now. The Supper was first administered in a large upper room; but it is not therefore necessary it always should be thereafter. The early Churches, as congregations, elected their bishops, that is, their pastors; but it is not considered binding upon us to do so. Possible circumstances might or might not advise it.

And so, also, there were evangelists in those days, who were Church officers. They were under the control of the superior Church officers, and were superior, in an official sense, to the regular pastorate, for they regulated and controlled their affairs. But we have no such regulations now.

“Country bishops” were then a regular order in the ministry. They were inferior to the city bishop, but superior to the presbyter. But we have no such office in the Church now. The thirteenth canon of the Council of Ancyra, which was held in A. D. 315, says: “It is not allowed to *village bishops* to ordain presbyters or deacons; nor is it allowed even to *city presbyters* to do this in another diocese without the license of the bishop.”

It would seem, therefore, that the rule, as to how far we are bound to conform our conduct to facts which transpired in the acts and doings of the apostles, is plain and simple, and ought to be easily understood.

CHAPTER VI.

NO FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT CAN BE, EXCLUSIVELY,
THE LEGAL FORM.

WE have seen that the Saviour did not prescribe any particular form of Church polity. We have also seen that the apostles, and the Church under their direction, did not practice any particular form of Church government to the exclusion of all others, according to the commonly received classification of forms of ecclesiastical government. And it now remains to be seen that no exclusive form of government could have been prescribed for the Church in all time, without great detriment to Christianity.

And we remark, in the first place, that the thing would be, in itself, well-nigh if not quite impracticable.

Church government is human government. That is, it is a government carried on and administered in all things by human officers. The theocracy is ended. There are but two *absolute* or *natural forms* of human government, whether such government be applied to a family, a small or large association, a Church, or a state. These are, a *perfect monarchy*, and a *perfect democracy*. The former is where *all* the elements of government are lodged in the hands of one person; and the latter, where they are *equally divided* amongst all. Among civilized people it is quite clear that neither of these forms ever existed, practically. All human government is a

modification or mixture of these two absolute or elementary forms. This modification may be made in a thousand different ways. That is to say, a government—applied to any human affairs, no matter what—may have in it more or less of either of these original elements. And this infusion of either one of these original elements may be, in every conceivable degree of proportion, located in any one, or in any number of an almost numberless set of functionaries.

Human government, applied to no matter what, is, for the sake of convenience, generally classified into the following denominations: Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Republic. Neither of these forms, however, is pure: they always intermingle and intermix with each other in a thousand degrees of proportion. No two governments on earth, civil, ecclesiastical, social, or domestic, were ever precisely alike. That where the monarchical principle preponderates, or where it rules pretty largely, is called a monarchy. That which has a pretty large infusion of the aristocratic principle, is called an aristocracy. And where the republican principle predominates, or ranges pretty largely, it is called a republic. Every government on earth, however, from that which exists in a family of two persons in the utmost conceivable harmony, up to the rule of Alexander the Great, or the frantic tyranny of Nero, possesses, in some degree, each of these several forms or elementary principles. They are modifications of *pure* monarchy and *pure* democracy.

In the Church, the *names* of these forms of government are changed, for the sake of good taste and convenience. The principles, however, are inviolate, because they are *principles*.

The highest or most stringent form of ecclesiastical government which has existed in practice, is the episcopacy of Popery. And the lowest form is, perhaps, to be found in some modern denominations of the Baptist Church. Here we frequently find the principles of government so loosely adjusted

that it almost or quite ceases to be *government* at all. Every Church government, however, on earth, is made up of a mixture of pure or absolute episcopacy, and of pure or absolute democracy. And the various degrees of this admixture, in greater or lesser proportions, is called, respectively, Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, or popular Congregationalism.

The Church of England is episcopal; and the Wesleyan Methodists, right alongside, might, in a subordinate sense, be said to be also episcopal. But who does not see that the former government possesses ten-fold more of the pure episcopal principle than the latter? In the former case the bishops hold their office for life, and in the latter they are merely the presidents or overseers of the Conference, elected annually. Here in our own country the Protestant Episcopal Church is episcopal, and so are the Methodist Episcopal Churches. Yet it is apparent to the most casual observer that the former is far more episcopal than the latter.

Let an axiom be laid down here. If it be previously determined in the Scriptures that the Christian Church must be episcopal in its government, that is the same as to define precisely the functions of a bishop and the exact character of the government of the Church, so far as the episcopate forms a part of it. If the original prescription does not settle specifically all questions of this sort, they can never be settled afterwards, in the very nature of the case. If the original grant does not settle specifically all questions of this sort, but merely prescribes that in Church government some ministers must exercise supervisory control over other ministers and Churches, a hundred questions may afterwards arise as to how much or how little authority the bishop must have in order for the government of the Church to conform to the grant. And to settle these questions is to do no more nor less than to settle almost every question that can arise with regard to Church government.

Suppose the Constitution of the United States prescribed that the government of States, in order to be admissible into the Union—that is, in order to be legal—must be republican, and had *left the matter there*: this would have admitted any thing into the Union that chose to call itself republican. If there be no perpetually existing power to determine, in each particular case, whether its republicanism conforms to the meaning of the prescription, then the prescription amounts to nothing. A stringent republic is but a liberal aristocracy.

Now, suppose it had been said in the Scriptures that Church government must be episcopal. That is determining nothing, or almost nothing. For the following questions arise, and remain to be answered:

Is it to be the episcopacy of the *absolute* rule of bishops, unchecked and uncontrolled, and kept in being by the *absolute* power of the order?

Or is it to be the episcopacy of Popery, which is somewhat modified, where the bishop is dependent for his power and its continuance, in some small degree, upon others? Or, if Romish episcopacy be meant, what distinct power is to be placed in the hands of the pope, the patriarch, the primate, the archbishop, the cardinal, and the bishop, respectively? Are all these several orders to be continued? or if some may be dispensed with, what ones? Is the episcopate or the presbyterate, either, or both, or which one, a sacrament?

Or suppose the episcopacy of the Church of England be meant: then several questions arise. Is the King, or perchance the Queen, to be the head of the Church? that is, the chief of the bishops? Or if the government chanceth to have no sovereign, what then? Must there be archbishops? and if so, what distinct authority must they possess? Must the prelates have a seat in the civil legislature? and if so, in which branch, if there be more branches than one? Must

they have one, or more than one vote, and in what cases? (English episcopacy gives each prelate a seat in the House of Peers, and a vote on all questions, and, in some classes of questions, two votes, one as bishop and one as lord.) Must bishops have power to ordain beyond the limits of their own government? (According to English episcopacy, they have not.) Then, if the territory of any supposed government be partly, or mostly, or wholly subjugated by other governments, what then?

Then, if English episcopacy be not meant by scriptural episcopacy, let us look elsewhere.

Is that of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States meant? Here there are no archbishops. Nor have the prelates, *ex officio*, any civil power. But there are several questions pertaining essentially to the episcopacy to be answered. In this Church the prelates form a "House of Bishops," which is a coördinate branch of a "General Convention," which composes its legislature. The vote of both houses is necessary for the passage of any act. Now, must the authority of the bishops be thus trammelled and controlled by clerical and lay delegates of a convention? or must they have power of themselves to control the Church? The bishops, singly or in the aggregate, have not the power of electing other bishops. Now, in "scriptural" episcopacy, must each bishop have the power of electing his successor? or, how many bishops may elect a bishop? or, may all the bishops in that Church collectively exercise that power? or, may the bishops and clergy, and how many of the other clergy, elect bishops? Or must laymen, and if so, what or how many laymen, join in the election of a bishop? Episcopacy in this Church prescribes that a bishop must be at least thirty years of age before his ordination. Then, would episcopacy be valid if the man to be ordained were only twenty-nine? or, what is the age of eligibility for scriptural episcopacy? In

other Churches sometimes they were *ten*, sometimes *five* years of age. Must a bishop, in order to be a valid bishop, as in this Church, as a condition for ordination, promise, among other things—and what other things?—to “conform to the doctrines and worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States?” Must he have power to ordain a minister by prerogative, or by what concurrent authority? Must he or must he not have power to withhold or refuse his installation of a minister, as pastor of a particular church, when he has been elected to such pastorate by such church? This is an element of episcopacy in the Church in question.

And if the episcopacy of the Protestant Episcopal Church be found not to be a correct definition of the episcopacy we are in search of, let us look into the episcopacy of the Methodist Church; for here also is “episcopacy.”

In this Church episcopal jurisdiction is common among all the bishops. Is this a scriptural element of episcopacy? or, would it do if jurisdiction were special and restricted? May they or may they not have sub-bishops under them, like the presiding elders in this Church? Is a joint and common presidency incident to scriptural episcopacy? and if so, as is the case in the Church now before us, what is to be done in possible cases of disputes for the right of the chair? Must the bishop have the right of appointing the pastors of the churches arbitrarily? If they have not the right of electing their own colleagues and successors, who has? May laymen participate in such elections? In an *episcopal* Church, as is the case in the Church now before us, may elders ordain, if there be no bishop? Must bishops necessarily hold their office for life? Or, if during good behavior, who are to be the judges of good behavior—the Court of Bishops, as in the Protestant Episcopal Church, or “twelve travelling elders,” with the right of appeal to the General Conference, sitting as a court of appeals?

Or, let us suppose a case. Here is an Episcopal Church where bishops are elected and solemnly set apart to a general or special oversight of the Church every year: the term of service expiring and the successor regularly taking the vacated post annually. It stipulates that in the event of a bishop not being present at the annual conventions, a president shall be elected from among the elders, who shall ordain others to the ministry. No bishop shall be eligible to reëlection. Every bishop must be at least eighteen years of age. They shall be elected by all the churches, each member having one vote. The bishops are amenable, upon charges of heresy or immorality, to the church nearest where they reside respectively.

This is, beyond all question, an Episcopal Church: as much so as is Rome, or "The Establishment."

We have of course nothing to do here now with questions of expediency.

Now, every one of the foregoing questions relates, essentially and primarily, to the specific functions of episcopacy. Not one of them is an inquiry of mere expediency aside from an illustration of "episcopacy." And before it can be with certainty determined what "episcopacy" *is*, in precise contradistinction to what it is *not*, every one of these questions must be answered; yea, and a hundred more similar ones that might be asked.

Nothing is more true than the possibility of forming twenty, or five times twenty, different Church governments, each one of which shall be episcopal, and all of which shall range from a higher point of ecclesiastical despotism than there ever existed among men, down to as low a point of democratic rule as could be properly called a government at all. In fact, *episcopacy* does exist under a great variety of forms of Church government.

It follows then, necessarily, that if you can conclude from

any thing you find in the Scriptures, or out of the Scriptures, that an apostolic Church must be "episcopal," you have determined almost nothing with regard to what kind of a government it must have ; that is, how episcopal, or how popular it must be.

How much of the episcopal element must a Church have in order to be episcopal ? That question cannot be answered categorically.

In the very nature of government—as has already been shown—Church government, or the government of any thing else—there are but two *absolute* elementary kinds. 1. That which is perfectly absolute, in the hands of one person exclusively. 2. That which is equally divided among all. And different forms of actual government, it must be remembered, is only another name for the various modifications of absolute concentration on the one hand, and perfect distribution on the other. And, in strict philosophy of thought, there have been as many of these modifications as there have been governments among men,—civil, ecclesiastical, literary, monetary, social, domestic.

Then, what is necessary to be done in order for it to be prescribed in Scripture, or anywhere else, what kind of a government the Church must have ? A complete discipline must be set forth. Surely nothing short of this will answer that question.

Certainly it could be prescribed that government must be episcopal, or that it must be presbyterial ; but this determines but little ; for it may be episcopal, and be a more stringent government than perhaps ever existed ; or it may be episcopal, and be as liberal a government as the most liberal could desire.

We might, likewise, if it were deemed necessary, proceed to look over the presbyterial form of government, as we have done the episcopal, in order to determine, scripturally, or by

any other standard, *what* it was; and we should find it necessary to make quite as many inquiries, and to quite as little purpose, as we have done about episcopacy.

It is not claimed—cannot for a moment be claimed, by the stoutest advocate of the most stringent episcopacy—that it has but one single element that is peculiar to itself, and which does not in any degree enter into other forms of government, or pertain to the ministry in common. That is the *exclusive right to ordain*, under all possible circumstances. This is merely apostolic succession set forth in other words. This we will look at in future.

Then there is, philosophically and practically, no distinct and decidedly marked difference between episcopal government and presbyterial government.

With regard to the different forms of government, and of the conformity, in various degrees, of Church government to the various forms of civil government, or the infusion into the several forms of Church government of the principle of monarchy, of aristocracy, or of republicanism, it ought, perhaps, to be incidentally remarked—

That our political principles by which we, in this country, are so strongly attached to republicanism, are likely sometimes, perhaps, to lead us into error. No man is abstractly in favor of, or opposed to, monarchical, aristocratical, or republican government. For the government of the state, we are all in favor of the latter, and opposed to the two former. But still, nothing is more common among us than aristocratic or monarchical government. Domestic government is monarchical. Social government—the government of most kinds of merely social voluntary societies—is usually a mixture of republicanism and aristocracy. The government of schools, colleges, literary societies, banks, business or monetary associations, or mechanical or scientific societies, is almost exclusively monarchical or aristocratical, or mixtures of these ex-

tremes. The government of the Church—of all Churches in this country—is partly aristocratic, with an infusion, in a greater or less degree, of the principles, respectively, of monarchy and republicanism. This must necessarily be the case, so long as ministers are, *ex officio*, the leaders, overseers, supervisors, feeders of the flock.

All this remark, however, is thrown in by way of parenthesis, and does not logically belong to the scientific argument now before us.

It is impossible for the Scriptures to have prescribed any particular kind, or form, of Church government for all time, from the further consideration that this involved the indispensable necessity of also prescribing the same thing with regard to civil government in all time. To determine the one, it became also necessary to determine the other.

And for the following reasons :

It belongs to the civil magistrate alone to determine how far the state shall participate in the government of the Church. Whether this ought to be so, is another question ; and for this participation to have been prohibited, would be to regulate the civil government.

It is a fact, this day, that the supreme officer in the Church of England is a woman by the name of Victoria. This woman—or if the office were held by a man, it is the same thing—is an officer, and the first officer, in the Church, *by virtue* of the civil office which she fills. Now, if you change this feature in the government of the Church of England, you make a very essential modification of it ; and it depends exclusively upon the civil government of Great Britain to determine whether this, as well as many other features in that Church, shall or shall not be changed.

It is in the exclusive power of the king and parliament to change or modify the government of that Church at pleasure. The civil government *established* episcopacy in that Church,

as it now exists; and *continues* it there from year to year. It is perfectly within its power to change it to-morrow—to displace episcopacy altogether—and prescribe that it shall be presbyterial, of this, that, or the other modification.

There is not, this day, a Church government on the earth, good or bad, right or wrong, that is not what it is by prescription or sufferance of the legislature of the land where it is located.

A few years ago, the Church and the state were united in the same government in this country. And why are they not now? Not, surely, by any thing the Church did or could do. The Church alone had no power to change its form of government, or to determine what it should be. But simply because the legislatures of the States—Virginia first, and Massachusetts last—between the years 1785 and 1833, enacted that the two governments should be separate from and measurably independent of each other.

The *possibility* of the Church and the state being united, or in any way, or to any extent, mingling with each other, by virtue of the action of the state solely, renders it clearly impracticable that any form of Church government could have been prescribed in the Scriptures.

And, moreover, the government of every state in this country does, and all civil government should, to some extent, regulate all other governments existing within its jurisdiction. The civil laws do, and should, to some extent, regulate the government of the family, of schools and colleges, of plantations, of prisons, of armies, of Masons and Odd-Fellows, of banks, of railroad companies, of steamboats, of churches, etc., etc. *How far* the civil government ought to go in its supervision of these governments, in each particular case, is another question, and to determine which, is to make laws in the civil legislature, or to regulate civil government.

It is clear, then, that to prescribe any particular thing as

to the form of government of a family, or a school, or a Church, or the like, is to prescribe with regard to civil government; for the civil government *may* prescribe otherwise. The Scriptures prescribe that children shall be obedient to their parents: that the wife shall be subject to the husband: that Church members shall be subject to those who have the rule over them. This merely enjoins submission and subordination in very general terms, but prescribes nothing as to any form of proceeding in either case.

We come next to inquire, whether a uniform system of Church government would not be likely to frustrate and defeat the whole scheme of the gospel? The Church is an institution of the gospel.

The gospel is a practical system, designed for men—just such men as live here in this world; and is precisely fitted and adapted to the particular circumstances and condition of all men in all possible states and relations. The Church, as a useful and proper institution of the gospel, designed to accompany it wherever it goes, must also be adapted, and in like manner capable of subsisting, in efficiency and strength, in all conceivable human conditions. Look at the almost endless variety of human conditions and circumstances. Now, the design is, evidently, that in all these conditions the Church shall subsist in all conceivable healthfulness and vigor.

The design, nay, the command, of the Almighty is, that every man shall live every day in Church fellowship. No matter where he may chance to be, or in what age he may live, the design is that he live in Church fellowship. It may not be practicable for him at any particular time to enter into this fellowship, if he be not now in it; but this is the fault of himself and of other men. The rule is for every living man to live in the personal and immediate fellowship of the Church of Christ.

And to what a variety of circumstances the Church and the government of the Church must adapt itself! Here, for instance, is a most enlightened and religious community, where the minister holds a position scarcely above mediocrity amongst the people. There the people are exceedingly unlearned and ignorant. Here, again, they are almost all vicious, ignorant, stupid, and sensual; and there is a missionary station among savages. Here is benighted, degraded, idolatrous China. Here is a ship's company, away far, far upon the ocean. Would the same *form* of Church government be best adapted to all these circumstances, no matter what form may be supposed? Here is an army under military discipline, and under a government opposed to Christianity; and there are a thousand prisoners of war, away on an island of the sea. Here are fishermen and petty tradesmen, along the shores of Lake Gennesaret; and there is Athens, the patroness of art and science. There are three hundred American Congressmen. There are the slaves on Southern plantations. There are the hordes of North American Indians. There are large and long exploring expeditions, by sea or by land. There are the sailors of a man-of-war: the colliers of England: the emigrants upon the plains of the West: the priest-ridden Papists of Rome: the superstitious Creoles of Mexico: the half-way or complete revolutionists of Cuba or South America.

Now, is the thing in itself naturally and philosophically possible, to adjust any one specific form of Church government to the condition and circumstances of this variety of people, so that that form be certainly *best* calculated to promote their spiritual condition? Surely this would not be *adapting* Christianity to the circumstances and condition of men at all. It would be to require them to adapt the world to the gospel. Whereas, nothing is peremptory in religion except its faith in Christ. No external form, no outward habiliment, no mere

ceremony, attitude of the body, or utterance of the tongue, is peremptory and absolute in religion.

But, further, it may be safely supposed that the world has as yet seen very little of human condition; and we are therefore very incapable of judging or speaking of its variety. It is presumable that the *whole* history of the world's entire age has as yet presented but a fragment to the eye of human observation. We look back a few days and years through the successions of a few almanacs, and we call these times ancient. A little shorter view, and these years were old times: the last century comprises the later ages of the world; and thus we talk and teach what we call chronology. But perhaps chronology has as yet scarcely numbered its first incipient datable period. Perhaps the Church has as yet scarcely emerged into a proper infancy. Who are to see the ruddy buddings of its childhood? What is to be the condition and circumstances of its youth? What is to be the condition of the Church as the world passes on, and on, in its hasteless pace, through cycle after cycle of a thousand years or centuries each, and rises, after a while, into early manhood? And how are things to look, and what things are to be, during the adult periods of the Church, and its progress, if that term means any thing, in its sere old age? What are twenty, a hundred, a thousand millions of years? Is it a *long time* for a world to live? If so, then what is about the average age for a world?

These are long periods as compared with the life of a man, whose age is three-score and ten years, or the life of a fly, whose age is an hour; but that is not the question. Are they *long* periods as compared with the life of a world? And what changes are society and the face of the world to pass through? Look at the present condition of civilization and civil polity. Look at Africa and China. Look at Mohammedanism and Popery. How long are missionaries to be necessary? Most likely but a very short time, for the world is a small one—has

but few people, never can have many : it must soon be reduced to moral and civil subjection ; and the church-going bell will most likely in a thousand or a million of years be heard *all over it*. We look for great changes to take place in a few, or a few thousand years, in the state of learning, science, infidelity, and such things. How long will infidelity exist in the world ?

Now, all these suggestions, and many others that might be named, indicate the probability that the battles of the gospel will be fought on a thousand different fields, with many different kinds of weapons, in many different ways, and with a variety of results. The armies of the Lord must address themselves to the armies of sin, according to the position and circumstances of the latter. Millennial dawn will burst upon the world some day ; and who knows what that will be ? Outright opposition to religion will then be at an end ; but the warfare is still to be prosecuted, no one knows how long, on other grounds.

Now, is it possible that the functions of government could be so arranged, once for all, once for all time and all possible conditions and circumstances, so as to be *best* adapted to answer the ends of Christianity in this endless variety of mutation and human condition ? The thing is not possible.

But the difficulty is heightened immeasurably from the further consideration that what we call *government*, in a Church, is not a thing primarily and naturally essential to Christianity at all. Disciplinary rule, or coercive authority, or the arm of government, is in its nature incidental, evanescent, and of doubtful and uncertain utility, except at the moment. Ecclesiastical discipline is only necessary *because* of the existence of some things which may not, nay, which certainly will not, continue to exist as long as the Church does. It was necessary for the well-being of the Church in the days of the apostles, and it is necessary now ; but it is only necessary because of the incidental condition of the world in respect to

sin and sinfulness. Of what utility is coercive discipline, with the Church and the world in a staid, settled condition of millennial peace and progress?

Who can measure precisely the difference between mundane millennial beatitude, and that higher state of bliss which is the final state and reward of the faithful in Christ? And hence who can tell whether Christianity is, or is not, in its nature, capable, under possible circumstances, of carrying the world forward in morals and religion to regions beyond where it is possible for coercive government to make its way? We are warranted in believing that the world is, in its future history, to pass through scenes and periods of bliss, and holiness, and peace, and concord, and love, and harmony, oneness of aim, and mutual and spontaneous benevolence and love to God and love to man, quite incompatible with our notions of legal restraint and compulsory process, which are the elements, and aims, and instruments of government.

That "thousand years" of apocalyptic measurement is to be a part of the world's history. And who knows how many almanac years that period will comprise?—what kind of government shall be called *scriptural*, and who shall conduct the controversy when the world of mankind "shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years?" What use will the world have for "episcopacy," with which to keep the world, or rather the Church, in order, when "all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him?" "The mountain of the Lord's house is to be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it." The "sword" of authority shall become the instrument of husbandry; the "spear" of coercion shall change its vocation so far as totally and finally to leave its former employment and become the pruner of the fig tree. War and strife shall cease, all eyes shall look in the same direction, all hearts shall

pulsate harmoniously, neither shall they learn war any more. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

And when this shall be the condition of the world, must we have the "authority" of the "bishop" to keep the Church in awe and in order? Could we not with safety dispense with his rule when "kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers?" What is the object, what the aim, what is the purpose and intention of government in the Church?

And, moreover, Church government, as a concomitant of Christianity, is not essentially different from civil government. They ought to be, and will be, one and the same thing. It would not be *expedient* to have them united in the present condition of the world. So think most men who have seen the experiment of severance fairly tried. But this is only a question of incidental expediency. There is no reason growing out of the nature of man's constitution which requires the severance. The reason why they ought not to be united now is because of the prevalence or existence of sin in the world. Let all men become holy. Let the time come when the world shall be filled with real Christians, and continue full by early regeneration. Let the time come when uniformly such shall be the prevalence of piety and the rule of Christ, that the period of incipient moral accountability, and the period of sound conversion to God, and the practice of sound Christianity, shall blend together and open out simultaneously in early life; and when there shall be no "world" outside of the Church; and then surely "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose

kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

The coercive rules of moral regimen, and the functionaries of legislation, of judicature, and of executive, for men, *as members of Christ's Church*, in contradistinction to men of the world generally, shall cease with the reasons for their institution.

Sectarian divisions, within proper limits, and consequent division of Church government, are believed, by the writer at least, to be useful, if not necessary, under the presently existing circumstances. But who can tell how long they will be useful, or how long they will exist? Looking even but a little way into this unexplored sea of mutation, and viewing even faintly the many radical changes and transformations which lie evidently upon the face of the future, who can tell how long "Church government" will be known in the world, otherwise than in the history of the past?

The essential functions of *government*, and of *ministry*, are so far from being identical, that they are philosophically inconsistent and antagonistic. The one is *rule*, and the other is *service*. Temporary expediency, and nothing but temporary expediency, the existence of external sin in the world, requires that, for the present, they should be vested in the same person. We expect to do better, however, so soon as the condition of the world and the condition of the Church will allow of our doing better. But what then will become of the natural functions of government, or how they will be distributed, or what will be the distinction, or whether there will be a distinction between *Church* and *State*, or by what gradual and lengthened processes these changes will come about, no one can tell.

The Christian *religion* is always necessarily the same, because God and his word are the same, and because the constitution of man, as it was originally established, is not inter-

ferred with. But the external circumstances, or mere habiliments of Christianity, are matters of temporary expediency, and must change with the changes of external things around us, in order for religion to be regarded the same in essence and practice.

There is not in the word of God a precept or prescription that is merely arbitrary.

The system of the gospel is but a full development of the system of man's constitution in the circumstances in which he chances to be found. There is not a precept, command, direction, prescription, suggestion, or recommendation, in the Bible, *the reason* for which is not found in the moral, mental, or physical constitution of man and the circumstances by which he is surrounded. It is precisely *because* he is just the creature he is—because he is endowed with the faculties and nature he has; because these faculties and nature are perverted and subverted just as they are; because his spiritual enemy, within and without, is precisely what he is; and because the mercies of God yearn over him just as they do—that every particular single provision in the Bible is arranged and modified just as it is. The philosophic exactness with which *every thing* in the Bible is adjusted and fitted to suit and benefit man, just exactly as he is, is inconceivably precise and definite. Look at what he is required to do, in every detail and minutia, and then mark the natural and beneficial results that unavoidably follow a strict compliance with the Divine precepts. See how exactly every particular thing written *for* man in the Scriptures corresponds to the particular things found *in* man and his nature and circumstances.

Now, the supposition of a Divinely prescribed form of Church government, involves the idea, and is inseparable from the idea, that there is a corresponding segment in man's constitution looking to and calling for this precise form of government. And is it too much to say that this notion does

not rise above an absurdity? There is nothing in the Scriptures which is purely arbitrary—nothing in the Scriptures that is not based upon a reason.

The questions, What function of government, and in what degree, shall be placed in the hands of this officer, and what in that? whether certain jurisdiction shall extend here or be restricted there? whether this minister shall preside in this assembly, or that one in that? whether there shall be class-leaders, and what shall be their duties? whether there shall be presiding elders, or bishops, and what shall be their duties? whether there shall be annual or biennial conferences or synods? and whether these assemblies, or some other body or individual, shall act judicially or executively?—these, and many other questions that might be asked, which pertain essentially to the government of the Church, are questions that no man can answer categorically. They are questions that do not pertain to Christianity essentially, and can only be answered on grounds of expediency alone, and by first taking a view of the Church and the world, if, perchance, at the time, the human family should be capable of being so distinguished. In a thousand, or ten thousand years or ages afterwards, if the same questions be asked, the duties of several officers will be vested in one, or be dispensed with altogether, and other changes will be made, according to the demands of the times.

When an uneducated youth shall not be found in all the land; when a higher condition of science and learning than is now found in the best classes of our best colleges shall be common in all classes; when the morals of all classes of society shall present a better appearance than the best portions of our best Churches do now; must Church government be precisely the same it ought now to be at our missionary stations? Let it be repeated, that Christianity is precisely suited to mankind in all possible circumstances and conditions.

But Church government is a mere incident or institution of the gospel; and therefore in its nature can have no immovable axioms. It cannot be universally adapted and fitted, because its very existence is only incidentally necessary.

Take any particular form of government you may, modify and arrange it as you may, and apply it to the Church in all possible conditions the world can be placed in, in the ample and varying providence of God, and see what difficulties you will encounter, and what disadvantages you will incur. The Lord wisely avoided all these obstacles in the way of religion, by leaving Church government an open question, in the hands of wise and pious men.

And again. What is Church government intended for? In regard to what things are governors to govern? What questions are they to decide? What actions are they to control? Are they to govern in matters pertaining to religion? By no manner of means! Ecclesiastical functionaries have no sort of right to govern, or attempt to govern, except in matters of mere temporary incidental expediency, relating to external conduct. It is presumed that outside of rank Romanism it will not for a moment be held that Church officers may govern any persons, other than themselves, in matters of religion. So far as all matters of religion are concerned, there is the Bible, written and published once for all. That, and that only, is the *government* that the world or the Church can properly have.

Then what is more probable—nay, what is more certain—since Church government can only reach to such matters as are in their nature incidental, and grow out of ignorance and departures from the gospel—what is to be looked for with greater certainty, in some part of the world's history, than the time when a judicial or an executive office in the Church will be a mere sinecure—when a staff of authority will be as useless as a wand of moonshine? That changes tending to

this condition of things stand out in the distant future, and are clearly discernible, both on the page of prophecy and of nature, is clear and indisputable.

Church government is not, cannot be, an inherent ingredient of the gospel. It is, when necessary at all, only incidentally necessary. It is liable to changes so great that in one age of the world it may be a thing quite different from what it is at another time. If men who live now were to see it ten thousand years hence, in all probability they would be unable to recognize a single feature in it. It was practiced in Palestine in the days of the apostles, for the same reason it is here now—it was at that time necessary for the well-being of the Church. But Palestine and the apostles are but just passed by us. We can almost touch them, so close are we upon their heels. The apostles lived but yesterday; and the prophets but a span behind them. Our successors, in a few, or a few thousand, or a few millions of generations, will class us with the apostles—almost with them, only eighteen or nineteen centuries off. Church government never can have a fixed and absolutely settled form, if, indeed, it can be always necessary at all.

The impossibility, therefore, of fixing, once for all, a form of Church government which would be exclusively the legal form, but adapted to answer the end of government under all circumstances, is apparent. To fix permanently any form of government for the Church, would be to control the civil government of the world; to damage, if not to ruin, Christianity, for lack of uniform adaptation; and to unhinge and dislodge the settled principles and axioms of God's administration.

CHAPTER VII.

ORDINATION.

ORDINATION is either the act of conferring holy orders, by which the person is initiated into the ministry, and thus invested, by the personal authority of the ordainer, with the authority of a minister; or, it is the public, solemn, and authoritative recognition and setting apart of a person as a minister, by the Church, by which his relation to the Church, as its minister, is established.

It will not be attempted, in the following remarks, to examine all the ground and all the notions which writers of very fair respectability for talents, learning, and piety, have occupied and held with regard to the rite and the nature of ordination. It is not deemed important to debate the question whether ordination be a designation to the ministry of the gospel, or a designation to a particular church as pastor thereof, and the person ceasing to be a minister, and his ministerial orders abating, on his ceasing to be the incumbent of that particular pastorate. This question has been ably and extensively debated; but it is presumed that the Christian world, for the most part, has settled down upon the doctrine that ordination is a designation to the ministry, without particular reference to any particular Church. It will be so considered in the following remarks:

The doctrine that the act of ordination, abstractly and specifically considered, confers ministerial authority—that it is

the investiture of the ministerial office—is the doctrine of the apostolic succession.

The argument intended to be made on that particular subject should not be anticipated further than a clear elucidation of the several other topics before us, as we pass along, seems to require.

We must look, however, a few minutes at the doctrine that the *rite* or ceremony of ordination, separately and independently considered, confers the ministerial authority of a minister of the gospel. It is not necessary, as many persons seem to suppose, that the proposition just now before us involves the inquiry, whether bishops, as contradistinguished from presbyters or elders, have or have not the sole authority to ordain. The doctrine of transmitted ministerial authority, by those who espouse it, may be held to run as well in a line of presbyters as in a line of bishops.

The doctrine of transmitted ministerial authority—that is, that ministerial authority is transmitted in the act of ordination, solely, from the ordainer to the ordained, by the imposition of hands, and the other ceremonies in the ordination—is held to be defective, from the consideration that there is not one word in the Scriptures which, in any way, relates to such a proposition, nor is the thing in itself either necessary or probable. It is in its nature a dogma, and therefore requires specific proof.

It is defective, also, from the further consideration that it supposes authority to come down from Christ chronologically, from his days to our own, *in some other way* than by and in the written Scriptures. Whereas, the Bible affirms, and all Christendom believes, that the *writing*, and the *things written* in the word of God, constitute the only authority and the only rule among men on the subject of the Christian ministry. We are required to believe nothing, and consequently to do nothing, under the belief of any supposed authority or truth

relating to religion, and which is not either written in the Bible, or naturally and necessarily true of itself. Any proposition relating to religion, and which *can be* otherwise, and which is not provable by the Scriptures, is not binding on a Christian. Hence the doctrine of authority *transmitted in ordination* is not a Christian doctrine.

The belief in question is defective from the further consideration, that it supposes the strange and unnatural idea that there is a principle of virtue, or an essence, or a vitality, or something not easily conceived of, emanating from Christ personally, and descending through fallible and sometimes sinful human agents personally, and which flows in a stream from man to man tactually, from the hands of one man to the head of another, into his hands and thence to the head of another, and so on, and that this current of virtue, or essence, or vitality, or whatever it might be called, is the *principle* of ministerial authority.

It is defective from the further consideration, that an ordination thus ceremoniously performed must be valid, that is, legal, and therefore binding on all parties, notwithstanding the direct and plain protest to the contrary of Jesus Christ, which is sometimes made against it. The doctrine does not, and in its nature cannot, discriminate between religious and irreligious persons—ordainers or ordained. The protests of Christ are plain against such religious or ecclesiastical acts, and all other religious or ecclesiastical acts performed by wicked men. Hence, in such cases, the ordination *cannot* be valid.

And its defectiveness may be further seen from the consideration that it separates entirely and widely between the Church and the ministry. It places the latter quite above the former and entirely distinct from it, whereas the ministry is truly only a part of the Church, and is not distinct from and entirely independent thereof.

If authority to ordain ministers inheres in a presbyter or bishop, whether they are or are not of the same order of ministry, or in any other Church officer, as such, how did he get the authority? In *his* ordination, of course, from his ordainer. And how did his ordainer get his authority? In the same way, and so on, back, back to the apostles. The doctrine of apostolic succession is the doctrine that the power to ordain inheres in some Church officers as such. This doctrine must either be adhered to or abandoned.

Having seen then, briefly, and pretty satisfactorily it is hoped, what ordination is *not*, let us proceed to inquire what it *is*. This inquiry brings us to the second proposition above made, viz.: That ordination is the public, solemn, and authoritative recognition and setting apart of a person as a minister, by the Church, by which his relation to the Church as its minister is established.

The question of a Divine, personal, specific, and immediate call to the Christian ministry does not belong to the present argument, and will not, therefore, be introduced. The doctrine is, however, fully recognized, and we proceed upon its supposed truth.

Then human persons have no agency whatever—can by possibility have no agency—in the investiture of the ministerial office as between the supposed minister and Christ. But the ministerial office, in its very nature, recognizes and has to do with three different parties, viz.: Christ, the minister himself, and the Church. The Church is not a party to the call to the ministry: cannot be cognizant of it by any distinct visible manifestations, and can only be informed by a fallible, erring man that such call has been made.

Secondly. It is clearly possible that the Church may be misinformed as to this fact, and we all believe that this is not very unfrequently the case. This may result from ignorance,

superstition, or an overheated and misguided zeal. For there is a zeal which is not according to knowledge.

Now, a Christian minister, in order to be properly, validly, and practically a minister, must have the seal and recognition of both the other parties, viz.: the Master who called and sent him, and the Church to whom he ministers. For, suppose a man to be truly called of God to the sacred office: if the Church does not in some way, by some public and authoritative mode, recognize and give their assent to the call, and receive the minister, he is no *minister to men*. And, on the other hand, suppose the Church to recognize a man as a minister, and by whatsoever public or private acts—any thing possible for them to do, in order to invest him with ministerial functions—and the invisible movings of the Holy Ghost in designating the man as a minister be lacking: he is most surely no minister *of Christ* to the Church, however much or however little men may be mistaken in the premises.

Hence, in the very nature of the case, in order for a man to be divinely and practically a minister to the Church, he must have the Divine call and investiture, and also the human assent and investiture of the ministerial functions. The former may, and undoubtedly does, give him a personal *right to be* a minister; and it may and does also make it his duty to preach. Not absolutely his duty, however. It is his *duty* to preach only upon condition of his being able to induce the Church to come into the arrangement. Because, to preach, not only implies the vocal utterance of truth on his part, but a recognition of and a hearing of his preaching on the part of the Church. A minister alone of himself cannot preach. It requires the act and coöperation of both minister and people to make up what we call the preaching of the gospel.

Here, then, lies the necessity, and the only necessity, of

ORDINATION. The machinery of ministering the gospel cannot, in the very nature of the case, work without it.

Ordination, then, is the investiture of office, by the Church, *as between the Church and the minister*, but NOT *as between the minister and Christ*; for the Church is not the vicerent of Christ; neither is the existing ministry the vicerency of Christ. Human persons can act in their own sphere, and on their own behalf; but Jesus Christ is capable of attending to his own affairs, and does not make men his agents, except by special investment.

In order for a person, after the Divine appointment as minister, to become, in any practical or real sense, a minister, it is necessary for the Church of human persons to entertain and decide the question, upon all the information they may gather of the supposed Divine call to the ministry of any person who makes such profession. That question must be settled by the Church, before the man can become a minister. The Church may err. They may decide in favor of the Divine call, in some particular case, where really there is none. Or they may decide against it contrary to the Divine will. In such cases, the only remark necessary to be made is, that, as in all other cases of error in human judgment, we must suffer the consequences. But this cannot in the slightest degree interfere with the principle that the action, first of God in heaven, and secondly of men on earth, are both indispensably necessary in order to any man's becoming a minister of Jesus Christ to the Church.

The principle is the same as that of any other ministry, or an ordinary agency.

If a government send its minister or agent to another government to represent the interests and views of the former, the coöperation of all the three parties to the transaction is absolutely necessary before any thing can be done. The minister may be duly appointed as between himself and his principal.

But it avails nothing : it all falls to the ground, and becomes practically void and inert, unless such minister make it appear satisfactorily to the government to whom he is sent that he is thus legally and properly appointed. If he convince them, by proper seals and attestations of this fact, then another thing becomes necessary. They must *receive* him as such agent or ambassador. This they may or may not do. They may refuse to hear his mission, or to treat with the former government entirely.

So, it is evident the supposed minister is not a minister *to them*, until they, on examination, first believe him to be truly sent, and, secondly, *accept* or *receive* him in that capacity.

Just so of the minister of Christ to the Church. The action of the Church, then, in the matter, is indispensably necessary. The credentials of the minister must *be* good ; but, that does not avail—that alone will not answer—they must be *pronounced* good by the Church.

Now, this action of the Church constitutes the essence of ordination, as well as its end and seal.

And now, the question arises, *how* shall the Church do this thing ? It is apparent to all that it ought to be done in such a manner as will give to the act the highest sanction of the Church, its broadest and most authoritative seal, as well as its open and full proclamation. For it must be remembered, the minister is not the minister of Christ to *the Church* merely, but also to the world. It is eminently proper, then, for the Church to make this certificate and pronouncement, in a way best calculated to answer the end intended. Then it should certify the minister in question broadly, authoritatively, and openly to the world, as a plenary minister of the gospel of Christ.

The act or ceremony of ordination, like that of marriage, or of inauguration, is for the purpose of giving notoriety, force, sanction, universal recognition, to the investiture of

office, which is thus consummated and made patent before the world.

The President of the United States is ordained. But it is not the ceremony of ordination, abstractly and specifically considered, that gives him the right to be president. He derives that right from the people and States of the Union. But as this is a public office, it requires a public seal made by the performance of some public act, which amounts to a national recognition and a national proclamation of the personal investiture. So he is to go, on a set day, publicly before the people, and solemnly undertake, before the chief justice of the nation, the responsibility of his office; and at the hands of such chief justice to receive the oath of office, and thus be ordained or inaugurated into office. But it is not the *oath of office* received at the hands of the chief justice, abstractly and specifically considered, that makes him president. For if so, then the same chief justice could make any other man president, for he could administer to him the same oath. In administering the oath, which is the act of ordination, the chief justice acts not on his own behalf, by prerogative, but he acts as the executive officer of the nation: *the nation ordains*.

All public officers are ordained. From the President of the United States to the town constable, in state or in Church, or in private organized associations, all public officers are, in some way, ordained, installed, or inaugurated, as you choose to call it.

How does the judge of a court get to be judge? He is first appointed or elected to the office; but he may not yet enter upon the duties thereof, for he is not ordained. The legislature specifies the mode of performing this ceremony. It is made the executive duty of some certain officer to ordain him; that is, to inaugurate him; that is, to administer to him the oath of office, in some specified manner.

Hence we define ordination to be, *a public, solemn, and authoritative recognition and setting apart of a person as a minister, by the Church, by which his relation to the Church, as its minister, is established.*

But how ought the Church to proceed, in ordaining a man to the ministry?

The Church is a public body, and, as such, can act only in two different ways. Legislatively and judicially it can act in its public aggregate capacity; but executively, it can act only by means of a constituted agent. All public acts are either legislative, judicial, or executive. The *recognition* of a minister by a Church, is or may be considered either legislative or judicial—we need not stop to inquire which—and, therefore, it may be done by the Church in a body, in any one of several different ways in which any deliberative organization may decide a question. But the *setting apart* of the minister is in its nature executive. It may be called setting apart, or it may be called the personal investiture of the badge or seal of office. This cannot be done by the Church in a body, but requires, in the nature of the thing, the agency of an officer of the Church. Such agent, in this duty, acts as the executive officer of the Church. In such duty he bears the same relation to the Church that the President of the United States does to the people of the Union; or that a sheriff does to the people of a county. He is the means or instrument by which the will of the Church is executed.

Ordination, then, or the human acts necessary to make a man a preacher or minister, are, first, the *recognition*, and, second, the *setting apart*, or investment.

The Church does both these things. The former it does by its public decision in its collective capacity. The latter it does by its officer constituted for this purpose.

Ask Masons and Odd-Fellows, or Sons of Temperance, how their officers get into office. The public sense of pro-

priety of all men looks to and requires some public, patent seal of investiture.

The doctrine that a minister, acting as ordainer, performs the ordination of his own personal authority, independent of the Church, and not as its agent or executive officer, is the doctrine which was attempted to be refuted a few pages back.

The Church ordains. The governor of a State does not receive his authority from the chief justice who administers to him the oath of office, and formally inducts him into the gubernatorial chair. He receives his authority from the State, or the people of the State, and the chief justice, as the minister of the State, invests him formally and finally with the office.

The inauguration is an official proclamation to the world that that man is now truly and legally inducted into that office. It establishes publicly the relation between the new governor and the State. And the governor-elect is also a participant in the ceremony in which he solemnly receives the office, and promises before the world a faithful discharge of its duties. The compact is now solemnly and finally established and made patent.

And just so in matrimony. The man and the woman do not receive, respectively, the matrimonial *authority* from the officer who performs the ceremony. He fixes the public seal and makes the contract patent, and thus proclaims and establishes it before the world. The contract, as between the man and the woman, was made before his services were needed. But with his services the contract becomes valid as between the parties themselves *and the public*.

This is precisely the way, and the only way, in which every public investiture is made. Ordination otherwise considered would be an anomaly in human affairs.

A minister, in performing the rite of ordination upon another person, does not do so *because* he is a bishop, or

because he is a presbyter or elder. This point seems not to be well understood always, and therefore deserves particular notice. It is not the being an elder that authorizes him to ordain. It is not the being a bishop that invests him with authority to ordain. It is because the Church has placed upon him the performance of that duty. *The Church ordains.* Who performs the ceremony? The officer whom she charges with the performance of that duty. If the Church designate one officer as bishop, and invest him with oversight for a day, or a year, or a lifetime, and make it the duty of the bishop to ordain, then it is the duty of the bishop to ordain. If the Church dispenses with a general oversight, in the pastoral duties of the ministry, and only invests superior officers with the functions of presidency temporarily, or for short periods, and enacts that such president shall ordain, then it is his duty to ordain. *The Church ordains.*

According to the common sense of all men of common sense, it is manifestly appropriate and proper that the Church should select, as its executive officer, in performing so solemn and important and interesting a duty as that of ordination, its highest officer. But he performs this duty by the same authority as he performs any other ecclesiastical duty. He presides in an assembly of ministers, or of laymen, or both, because the Church places that duty upon him, and not by prerogative. He supervises here, sends a missionary there, or goes a missionary himself, gives appointments to preachers as special pastors, and does this or that, not by prerogative, not by any thing independently inherent in him, but because the Church so directs. He is still only a *minister*.

Ordination is one of these duties. No man ordains by personal inherent prerogative. He ordains because the Church has connected that duty with the office he holds. Ordination, either to the episcopate or the presbyterate, does not convey a personal *right to ordain*. It inducts a minister into an

office to which ordination usually pertains; and so he is invested with the necessary authority, and may perform the service whenever the Church requires it at his hands.

This view of ordination accords with the Methodist discipline, as well as with the character and philosophy of the thing. The Methodist Church prescribes—not the bishops or ministry exclusively—but the *Church* prescribes that bishops shall ordinarily ordain ministers; but, in certain contingencies, any other elders may perform the duty. Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Baptist, Churches, hold in substance the same doctrine.

This view of the question also gets entirely rid of the needless argument as to what officers in a Church, whether presbyters or bishops, have *the right* to ordain. *The Church ordains.*

CHAPTER VIII.

ORDINATION BY MR. WESLEY.

NOT a little dispute, first and last, has been had with regard to the ordination to the episcopacy of Dr. Coke, by Mr. John Wesley, and those who assisted him. And the arguments have been strangely drawn into discussions respecting the validity or invalidity of the Methodist Churches in America.

It seems that in 1784, Mr. Wesley, with others, ministers in Bristol, ordained Dr. Thomas Coke, a superintendent, or bishop—the words both mean the same thing—and that afterwards Dr. Coke came and exercised episcopal functions in America, in connection with Wesleyan Methodists here.

In looking into this matter, it should in the first place be remarked, that whatever of right or wrong, legality or illegality, prudence or imprudence, expediency or in expediency, may attach to this transaction, pertains to the persons who participated in it, or if they are dead, to their posthumous character.

The legality of that ordination, as between Mr. Wesley and his Church, is worse than an idle question now, for Mr. Wesley is dead. And as to its legality, so far as Christ, the Head of the Church, is concerned, there can be no debatable question, for it is a historic fact, already past, that it *did* serve the purpose intended. The blessings of God, with the out-

pourings of his grace, *did* accompany it in a most extraordinary manner.

But still, let the transaction be viewed in any light, or from any point of observation, any right or wrong connected with it attaches to the character of John Wesley, Thomas Coke, and the other ministers who performed it or participated in it. They acted morally right or morally wrong, wisely or unwisely. There the matter begins and there it ends. No man or body of men living now has, or can have, any interest in that transaction beyond the interest they may feel in the posthumous reputation of these good and great men.

Mr. Wesley is dead, and has bequeathed no personal grace or merit to any survivors, either to individuals or Churches.

The Methodist Church is not a true Church because of any thing Mr. Wesley ever did, or said, or taught, or thought. It is a true Church, if a true Church at all, because, and only because of its *present character*. If the thing at present—the Church—the whole or any integral portion of it, conforms to the Scripture model of a Church, then it is a true Church; and if not, then it is not. Mr. Wesley is not now even a member of it; and if he were, he would not be the Church, but only a member of it. Inquiries, therefore, respecting him, and inquiries respecting the Methodist Church, or any other Church, are totally different and distinct things.

But still, for another purpose, we propose to say a few words respecting this ordination.

The principles laid down in the foregoing chapter are, that ordination, or the consummation of the ministerial functions, as between the minister and the Church, consists in the action of the Church; first, in an expression of the Church's belief that the person is truly called to preach; and secondly, in the act of setting him apart by the imposition of the hands of an officer designated for that purpose.

Now, it is not pretended that that portion of the Methodist

Church which then existed in America, acted officially in this matter, so far as regards Dr. Coke, before his ordination. Nor was this absolutely necessary, for two reasons :

First. The orders conferred upon Dr. Coke were not absolutely restricted to this portion of that particular Church ; nor to any portion of any particular Church. He was ordained a superintendent, “to preside over the flock of Christ ;” and was then eligible to employment by, or connection with, any Church, in that or any other ministerial capacity. The great need for such a minister in the Methodist Church in America, furnished the occasion for the ordination ; and the whole Church, both in England and here, looked to Mr. Wesley, because of his providential relationship to the Church, to supply this desideratum.

Secondly. The doctrine in the foregoing chapter, respecting the two-fold action of the Church in making a minister, or a bishop, for it will apply equally to both, is not to be considered so stringent that the *order of proceeding* may not in any possible case be varied. The regular, ordinary mode is for the Church to act first in a body in receiving a minister, or giving its consent or acquiescence in the conferring of the proposed orders, and then for the ceremony of ordination to take place. But in the varied course and currents of things among men, this order of proceeding may be in a single instance impracticable. Many things are legally done, but irregularly done ; that is, done out of the regular and accustomed manner. Circumstances might by possibility make it necessary for the imposition of hands to precede the action of the Church. And if this should happen, it does by no means disturb the principle at all. A subsequent recognition of the act of an agent, by his principal, makes the act as valid as though it had been previously directed to be done.

Supposing then that this ordination had been performed in the Methodist Church in the United States, as distinct from

that in England, which, however, was not the case, the question of its legality would depend upon the question whether the Church did or did not subsequently ratify the act. And even this question never was important to any other persons than to Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke. If the Church did ratify the act, very well; then there was harmony between the Church and these ministers. But if the Church repudiated the act, and would not receive Dr. Coke as a minister, and recognize his ordination by Mr. Wesley, and his episcopal acts, then there was disagreement between the Church and those ministers, and either the one party or the other might possibly be considered blameworthy. This is the beginning, and the boundaries, and the end of that question.

But suppose—if we may be allowed to suppose in the face of notorious recent historic facts—suppose the ordination of Dr. Coke to have been invalid. What matters that to existing Churches and living Christians now? Are Churches no Churches, and Christians no Christians, because of some error, intentional or unintentional, committed in some ordination of a minister a hundred or a thousand years ago? It is my intention, by the blessing of God, to look into the doctrine of apostolic succession, after a while.

But that the Methodist Episcopal Church did affirm, sanction, and coöperate with Mr. Wesley in this ordination of Dr. Coke, is a fact as plainly enstamped upon the history of the country as any other historic fact. That it was a popular measure among American Methodists, greatly desired at the time, and was then and has ever since been sanctioned by the whole Church, and owned and recognized everywhere, is notorious. And that it was officially and legally affirmed and owned by the Church, is matter of undisputed record fact.

The General Conference of 1782 has the following entry:

“Question 19. Do the brethren in Conference unanimously choose brother Asbury to act according to Mr. Wesley’s orig-

inal appointment, and preside over the American Conferences and the whole work?

“Answer: They do.”

This, and several other similar acts of the American Church, recorded subsequently, respecting the general superintendency of Mr. Wesley over it, fully recognizes episcopal authority in him. He was, to all intents and purposes, a bishop to the American Church.

It may be said that he lacked ordination. But ordination, technically considered as the laying on of hands, is not *essential* to the exercise of episcopal functions. Ordination to the episcopacy does not place a man in a *higher order* in the ministry: it only sets him apart, or rather gives the churches proclamation that he is set apart, as a superintendent of ministers and churches.

The *essential* prerequisites of a minister—that is, the things without which no man *can be* a minister—are these two: First, a call from God; and, secondly, a full and patent acquiescence on the part of the Church that such call is real and true, and a public *receiving* of the minister as a minister of Christ. This public receiving, or induction into office, should be done by what we call ordination; but it is possible that in some cases this may be impracticable. National turmoil and disruption, the exigences of war, or pestilence, or famine, or shipwreck, may possibly render it impracticable. There is, perhaps, not much if any greater necessity for the formal *ordination* of a minister of the gospel than for the inauguration of a king, a president, a judge, or other high public functionary. And there is evidently, in the very nature of the case—if we look at the *nature* and *end* of ordination—less *necessity* for it in the case of a bishop than of an ordinary minister of the gospel.

The question, in the case of Mr. Wesley, is, then, whether the circumstances in which he was placed, the disruption in

the government which had just then taken place, the anomalous condition of the Church here, his well-understood relation to it, and the pressing necessity for the ordinances here in the American Church, justified him in ordaining Dr. Coke, he himself being without *ordination* to the episcopacy, but being really, virtually, a *bishop*? No minister on earth was ever more fully recognized by his whole Church—or, with few exceptions, by a larger Church—as a bishop, than was John Wesley. But at the same time we say he was virtually a bishop, we say he was ecclesiastically—as all bishops are—an elder.

And that the Church in America did fully sanction the ordination of Dr. Coke to the episcopacy, and receive him as such, is most fully, legally, and officially attested by every Conference of that day. So that the ordination of Dr. Coke has precisely the same official attestation as any ordination to the same office since.

Many persons seem to entertain erroneous ideas with regard to ordination—what it is. This was attempted to be explained in the foregoing chapter. The custom descended from the Jewish into the Christian Church, and, as has been explained, finds its reason and sanction in the nature of the case, and in universal practice.

“Their custom of ordination was evidently taken up by the Christians from a correspondency to the synagogue. That under the synagogue was done by laying on of hands. A two-fold use I find of this symbolical rite beside the solemn designation of the person on whom the hands are laid. The first is to denote the delivery of the person or thing thus laid hands upon, for the right, use, and peculiar service of God. The second end of laying on of hands was, the solemn invocation of the Divine presence and assistance to be upon and with the person upon whom the hands were thus laid. Thence in all solemn prayers wherein any person was particularly de-

signed, they made use of the custom of imposition of hands. From which custom Augustin speaks: "What is imposition of hands but prayers over a man?"—Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*, p. 264.

Ordination, then, following the ancient custom, is the setting apart of a particular man to a particular work. It is a solemn transaction in regard to a very solemn and sacred work. The idea of a solemn *setting apart* is derived from the immemorial usage of the Church. It carries about it, perhaps, no intrinsic or philosophic necessity, but it is invested with the most exalted veneration, the highest antiquity, and the most revered customs. The ceremony of designating a person for a particular work was done in this way. The imposition of hands, however, was not confined to this ceremony, but was used in the invocation of blessings, the conferring of miraculous gifts, etc.

Although the imposition of hands could hardly be considered essential in the ceremony of ordination, yet the antiquity of the usage, the solemnity naturally attending it, as well as the sacred reminiscences it calls up, and by which it impresses the candidate as well as the public with a sense of the real and true importance of the ceremony, seem to sanction the usage and call for its continuance.

Let us now briefly, in closing this chapter, for it is not inappropriate, inquire into the condition respectively of *unordained* and of *uncalled* ministers of the gospel, and their relation to the Church.

There is a sense in which it may be said that any man has a *right* to preach. A man has a right, on meeting his fellow by the way, to warn and caution and instruct him with regard to religion and moral accountability. And if he may thus advise and exhort one, he may two, or twenty, or a hundred. It is, moreover, the duty of all men to inculcate and spread abroad the principles and truths of the

gospel, as far and as wide as opportunity and ability may authorize.

But all this while it is true that Jesus Christ did plainly express his will that there should be in the world an order of ministers of his word, whose peculiar duty it should be to devote themselves to this special work. So that it cannot for a moment be denied that there is somewhere a distinction between a minister and a layman of the Church.

There are many things which a minister may do in the official discharge of his duty as pastor of a church, which a layman may also lawfully do, nay, which are his duty to do. And there are circumstances, too, which much more than justify a layman in performing services in the Church which really belong to the ministry. In truth, most of the duties of the Church and of religion seem to be common to the ministry and the laity. Still, the Saviour "ordained twelve." That the ministry of the word, as contradistinguished from the laity, is a fundamental and primary institution of the gospel, is beyond all question.

But it may be asked, Can a man be a minister, as contradistinguished from a layman, without ordination? This is nearly the same as to inquire, what particular actions constitute ordination. For it is apparent, in the nature of things, that a man cannot be a minister, distinct from a layman, without something by which he is thus distinguished. This mark of distinction must be personal; and as we have no hereditary priesthood, as in the Jewish Church, it must be by some act in the nature of a compact between the supposed minister and the Church, in which the former undertakes to be a minister, and the latter agrees to recognize and receive him in that capacity.

This compact, or agreement, or undertaking, ought to be—if the Church and the minister be supposed to be Christians—entered into in the most solemn, authoritative, and prayerful

manner, with the design, in good faith, to make a gospel minister. And if so, it must include two things, to say the least of it. First, it must be a solemn and prayerful and public expression of belief on the part of the Church, that such man is truly called of God to preach, and a willingness to recognize him as a minister of Christ. Secondly, there must be in some way, and by some solemn actions, a designation or dedication, or setting apart, of that man to the ministry.

Nothing short of this, at least, can distinguish a man from the laity, as a minister. Now, what these particular actions must be, is not expressly laid down in the Scriptures. The ceremony that is called ordination comes as near the practice of the apostolic Christians as we can well get; and to inquire how much of solemnity, of order, and of becoming and Christian-like ceremony, may be dispensed with, and the thing still be entitled to the name of ordination, or to something else that will answer in the place of, or as well as, ordination, is an inquiry that can, at least, lead to no profit. For that would be as useless as to inquire *how little* of ministerial duty a minister could perform, and still continue to be a minister.

There is no precise line. Neither is there any precise line between these and those and the other actions, which separates precisely, in all cases, between that which does and that which does not constitute ordination. The elements of ordination, as has been explained, consist not in external actions, words, or manipulations, but in the spiritual and religious thing. This is recognition on the part of the Church, separation, and dedication; the Divine call to preach being the foundation of the whole.

It follows, therefore, that there can be no ministry without ordination—not that the particular ceremonies which are usually called ordination are necessary, absolutely, but the spirit and essence of the thing must be present.

Without this, in the ordinary civilities of life, and the

courtesies of the day, a man may be called a minister, and a company of persons may hire him to deliver sermons to them on the Sabbath, but still he is a layman. He may, nevertheless, do some good in these public services—more good, perhaps, than any other person in the neighborhood. Then he is a useful man ; but he is still a layman.

As to the condition of a minister who is not called of God to preach, very few words need be said. To be a minister, is to be the minister, or servant, for this special work, of Jesus Christ. And to say that a man can be a minister of Jesus Christ in this special department of Divine servitude—viz., preaching the gospel—and not be specially and personally designated by Jesus Christ for the work, is to express a plain, simple, logical contradiction. For, to be a servant of a master, implies that the master send the servant, and direct the service.

An association of persons may engage one of their fellows to lecture on religion, or on any other subject ; to read to them, from the Bible, or any other book ; and all this may be for their supposed or real instruction or amusement : it may advance their morals and better the religious condition of some—for men may, and ought to, improve their moral and religious condition by personal intercourse and mutual instruction in duty—but all this does not make a Christian minister : though, perhaps, a man of a hundred times more value, he is no more a minister of the gospel of Christ than is a stage-player.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEACONRY.

PREVIOUS occasions in this work have led to allusions and explanations with regard to the office of deacon, so that it will not be found necessary to lengthen remarks in this separate chapter.

The office does not appear to be a primary institution of Christianity, but it grew out of the particular exigences of the case, after the ministry proper had been for some time in regular and successful operation.

When the number of the disciples was multiplied—Acts vi. 1—there were found to be more duties pressing upon the hands of the ministers than they could discharge. Already there were complaints in portions of the Church with regard to the distribution of the Church charities. The apostles saw that these complaints were not unjustly suggested, but at the same time it was not in their power to afford complete redress. Moreover, the difficulty was likely to grow worse, rather than better. They called the Church together, submitted the matter, and recommended that persons should be appointed to assist them in these duties.

They did not recommend an enlargement of the ministry, in an unqualified sense, but that persons should be selected—holy, zealous, good men—whom they might appoint over *this business*. The Church assented; and the Church—not the apostles—selected seven men, and the apostles solemnly

ordained them by the laying on of hands. They were ordained, however, not to the ministry, properly, but to *this business*—viz., the assisting of the apostles in those inferior duties which they had not the time to discharge personally. One object and result of this movement was, that the apostles might give themselves continually to *the ministry of the word and prayer*.

And it ought to be noticed that at this time, which was most probably in the first year of the ministry of the apostles, there were, most likely, no other ministers than the twelve apostles. When the first ordinations to the ministry took place we are not informed. The second verse of the sixth chapter of Acts very clearly leads to the idea that this was the first instance of ordination in the Church.

St. Paul, in 1 Tim. iii. 8, etc., clearly recognizes the deaconry as an institution, though not a primary and permanent institution, of Christianity. That the first deacons, or some of them, at least, assisted the apostles in *preaching*, also, as well as in other duties, is very clear. Stephen seems to have been a preacher. It is evident that deacons have been regarded, in all subsequent ages of the Church, both theoretically and practically, as preachers.

What is meant by a deacon not being properly a part of the ministry, is this. When we inquire into the proper and essential functions of the ministry, what do we find? We find that the *minister* is essentially and properly the *pastor*. The pastor is the minister—the minister is the pastor. Of course, the pastor is the preacher, but a preacher is not necessarily either a pastor or minister. Noah was a preacher; but we do not learn that he was pastor or minister to the antediluvian world. Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch; but he could not be said to be his pastor or minister. Peter preached to Cornelius and his family; but he could not be regarded as their pastor, or in any regular or legal sense their minister. His preaching was incidental. Paul and Silas

preached to the Philippian jailer. In fact, it is notorious, and well understood in all Churches, that the preacher is not necessarily, for that reason, a pastor. Preaching is, unquestionably, a necessary function of the ministry, but is not the only necessary function of the ministry. The proper and necessary functions of the Christian ministry are preaching and pastorate. And as a man must be a preacher in order to be a pastor, it may just as well be said that the pastorate includes the entire functions of a ministry.

The proper functions of the diaconry are preaching, and the performance of other subordinate duties of the ministry, as the assistant, or helper, or attendant of the regular pastor or minister. All that is attempted to be said is, that of himself, independently, he cannot be said to be fully a minister. He has not yet attained fully to the ministry, because he is not regularly, in virtue of his office, a pastor.

A man may be officially qualified to *assist another* in the performance of duties which he may not be qualified to perform himself.

Surely it cannot be maintained that "*the office of a deacon was of a secular character,*" that his duties were "*distinct from preaching,*" as has oftentimes been attempted. Those who have run into this error have done so from not carefully discriminating between *preaching* and *ministering the gospel*.

The duties to which the seven deacons were immediately introduced, were evidently deemed by the apostles inappropriate to the ordinary laity of the Church; else why the necessity of any specific appointment, and formal and solemn setting apart? They were duties which specifically pertained to the ministerial—nay, if any one pleases, to the apostolic office. When the apostles called the Church together to consider the matter, the conclusion was not, These are secular matters which the laity can attend to; but the conclusion was, Choose you out seven men.

Moreover, it was an office in the Church, to which they had been accustomed all along, in the synagogue worship. This office in the Christian synagogue had not been formally filled until now.

The qualifications required of the deacons were not merely such as would fit them for a proper and faithful administration of food and pecuniary "ministration," viz., *honest report*; but they were to be *full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom*. This seems to qualify them for preaching the gospel and otherwise assisting the apostles in their duties.

And so, immediately, we find Stephen, *full of faith and power*, disputing with the Cyrenians, Alexandrians and Cilicians, and doing *great wonders and miracles among the people*.

We also find Philip very soon at Jerusalem, where he very powerfully and successfully *preached Christ unto them*. It appears very satisfactory, also, that Philip administered the sacrament of baptism. It is said in Acts viii. 12: "When they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

The difficulties between Presbyterians and Episcopalians, on this subject, may, it would seem, be easily reconciled, by considering that a designation to the *preaching* of the gospel is not, properly and fully, a designation to the *ministry*; for the ministry supposes the pastorate, which is not an adjunct of the diaconry. They might unquestionably, incidentally, in stress of circumstances, be assigned, or assign themselves by consent of the Church, to a subordinate pastoral care, under the supervision of a pastorate proper. But the pastorate does not regularly pertain to that office. The deacon may *assist* a minister or pastor proper in his pastoral duties, as well as relieve him from any other labors.

CHAPTER X.

THE EPISCOPATE AND PRESBYTERATE.

THE EPISCOPACY has been, in the foregoing pages, defined to be an office in the ministry, the functions of which are, to preside over the Church in its deliberations; and to have a supervisory oversight of the ministry. This oversight may be general, as extending over the entire ecclesiastical organization in federate Churches; or it may be special, as restricted to a diocese; or it may itinerate at intervals of a year, or several years, or any other length of time, from one diocese or district to another. The bishop may be invested with the episcopal office for a shorter or longer period, or during his life, upon condition of a steady maintenance of good faith and morals. This condition must always attach, necessarily, to this as well as any other office in the Church; for it is an essential condition of Church-membership. And it would be absurd to suppose that a man could hold *an office* in the Church, who could not be *a member* of the same Church.

A PRESBYTER may be defined to be a minister of the gospel. That is, perhaps, as complete a definition as could be or need be given. An ordained minister of the gospel is a presbyter. A presbyter is an ordained minister of the gospel.

There is an ordination which a sub-minister or deacon receives, according to the apostolic example; but this is not an ordination to the full ministry; it is an ordination to the dea-

conry, which is but partially to the ministry. The man who, without any qualification or further explanation, is in the office of minister of the gospel, as Christ instituted the ministry, may be properly called a presbyter or elder. What peculiar duties in the Church some elders or presbyters may have assigned to them by the Church, is a question foreign to a proper definition of the office.

Usually the elder is the pastor of a congregation. This is, certainly, for the most part, the more regular or usual duty which pertains to the presbyterate. It is by no means necessary, however, that he have a special pastoral charge in order to continue to be a presbyter or elder. There are many circumstances which may give him other employment, or even no special employment.

The number and condition of the inhabitants of a particular town, or neighborhood, or garrison, or naval station, or the like, may require the employment of two or three elders, when it is deemed best for one of them only to have the pastoral charge.

It may be proper that a minister be assigned to the chaplaincy of a legislature, or to one or both of the houses of Congress, or of some other government; to a judicial tribunal, to a royal court, to a ship, or a navy, or an army, or a prison, or a school, or a college, or to men in any conceivable condition in which men may be found, when it might or might not be practicable for him to have a pastorate proper.

Or the minister may be charged with the oversight, temporarily or permanently, of several Churches, with such or such or any other limitations and restrictions, not inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity. A minister may be sent to look over, assist, and superintend missions, for a year, or a lifetime, or he may be, more strictly, a missionary himself. He may be charged with any duties, more or less important, that pertain to the ministry of the gospel. But he cannot be promoted

to a higher office in the Church than MINISTER. St. Paul was "an elder."

Properly speaking, the several offices in a Church do not imply *promotion*. There are no *higher* or *lower* offices in a Church, in the sense in which we apply these terms to secular official elevation. No official in the Church can rise higher than to be a *servant*. *Minister* and *servant* were originally synonymous words. In secular affairs, the wickedness of the world requires, in order to some tolerable degree of public peace and security, that some men *bear rule*. But, in the very nature of the case, no such circumstances can pertain to Christianity. Here all is equality. Essentially, necessarily, all stand upon the same platform. Is the Church the antitype of heaven? And who will bear rule in heaven? What will be the elements of *promotion* there?

But all this must harmonize with the idea of government, which appears almost, in a sense, to contradict it. It is frequently difficult, from the feebleness of language, to find words which will exactly copy the idea we wish to express. The maintenance of good order is not inconsistent with parity. Nor does equality prohibit the use of the best talent, judgment, discretion, and forecast of the wisest men, in the maintenance of good order, or in the pursuit, by the whole, of the safest and wisest course.

A government *in parity* is where the whole, officers and all, stand primarily and naturally on an equality; and where the functions of control come from the common mass, and lodge, by common consent, in certain persons. A government of *imparity* is where the functions of control, or some of them, reside in promoted officials, or in officers, as distinct from the masses. The term *parity* cannot be used as descriptive of government, so as to convey distinct ideas, without considerable explanation; for it must be used with more or less of modification.

It has been, in times past, debated whether the descriptive terms, "*bishop*," "*presbyter*," "*elder*," as used in the Scriptures, defined distinct and several offices, or were common names applied to the same office. But this question has long since ceased to exist among all men of even very moderate reading. It is now settled, on all hands, that these words, as thus used, are common, convertible, and synonymous, or nearly so. The distinction, as assented to by all theologians, where it was observed at all, referred only to some slight and unimportant circumstances, as the age of the person, or his having, or not having, at the time, a particular pastoral charge. That they did not denote any distinction in what is called *order* of ministry, is now the settled opinion; and therefore it need not be proved or argued.

But it is held that, nevertheless, although the several orders of ministry were not distinguished by these *names*, yet they were distinguished by the *duties* which did, in fact, in practice, pertain to these and those several ministers—that it does not matter *how* the several orders of ministry were distinguished in the apostolic economy, so that they were really and truly distinguished, into grades of order, in some visible and palpable mode.

This is a fair logical proposition, and must be fairly and logically met. It is, however, in the nature of the case, an independent affirmation, and therefore requires specific proof to be presented to those who hold to the doctrine of primary parity in the ministry, and that apparent imparity is only incidental, and grows out of the nature of the case and the preservation of good order.

The proof we are furnished with, and the only proof attempted, is in substance as follows. The substance only need be presented, for there is no disagreement about the details.

1. We are told that the apostles acted as general supervisors of the Churches in their day.

2. We are told that other ministers, under their direction, as Timothy and Titus, were sent by the apostles to exercise supervision over other Churches; and consequently they were bishops.

3. It is argued that other instances of supervision by ministers, in apostolic days, over Churches and ministers, is discernible in the ecclesiastical histories of those times.

To the *first* of these three propositions it is replied, that the fact is assented to; but it does not prove that the Church, in all future time, must be episcopal, or that it was then episcopal, in the sense of prelacy; for the reason, that this supervision *could not*, in the very nature of the case, have been avoided, no matter what sort of Church government they intended to establish, or whether they intended to establish any.

To the *second* it is replied: 1. The mere fact of supervisory control and assistance being afforded to the neighboring Churches, does by no means establish episcopacy as a Divinely instituted form of government; for this supervision is more or less the case in all Churches—in all forms of government. 2. If Timothy and Titus acted under the special direction of the apostle, as the supervisors of the Churches at Ephesus and Crete, then they could not have been bishops, unless there be two orders of bishops. It is not pretended that they supervised the Churches as prelates acting on their own behalf, in virtue of the *office* they held; but they were *sent* by other bishops, and acted *under their special directions and authority*. This proves too much. It establishes two distinct orders of bishops, with distinct superior and inferior powers. Paul was the prime bishop, and issues his mandatory authority at will and discretion to Timothy and Titus, the second order of bishops. They, in obedience to the commands of their superior in office, proceed to execute his will, and go and discharge episcopal duties over the Churches in

Ephesus and Crete, as the bishops of those Churches. This proves vastly too much, and destroys the doctrine as perfectly as an opponent could have desired to do it.

To the *third* argument it is answered, that the fact set forth may be, and quite likely is, true. It would be indeed very strange if it were not. It does not, however, establish Divine-right episcopacy any more than the like conduct in all portions of the Church does the same thing now. All that is contended for by these advocates of episcopacy is notoriously to be found in all well-regulated and efficient Churches on earth. It could scarcely be avoided when all are trying to push forward the power of the truth as far as possible.

Really it does appear that these three brief observations are a complete and successful refutation of the long, long, volume-full arguments made by prelatists, and built upon these three great pillars of prelacy.

Few ecclesiastical questions have occasioned more debate than that of the true scriptural relation between bishop and presbyter. This would seem strange too, since we have just remarked that it is conceded on all hands that the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* are the same, so far as order or office are concerned: that they are frequently in the Scriptures used in relation to the same persons at the same time.

It ought to be remarked, however, that this concession on the part of prelatist writers has not been fully made until within the last few years. The concession, however, though now fully made by all respectable writers, does by no means abate the controversy; for, as above remarked, it is contended that the *distinction* existed, though the *names* were the same.

It is possible, however, that more importance than is absolutely necessary has been sometimes attached to this specific question. It is very clear that if the doctrine of imparity, or three orders, could be established, according to the undertakings of prelatists, it avails not a whit in favor of prelacy. The

only thing that is attempted to be proved on this point is the alleged *fact* that this was the form and practice of the Churches in the days of the apostles and early Christians. And they conclude that, *therefore*, it ought to be the form in all Churches.

But this conclusion does by no means follow, for the following reasons :

1. Suppose prelacy did exist in the apostolic Churches : it does not necessarily follow that it must always exist. There may have been abundant and good reasons for its adoption there at that time ; but that does not prove that those reasons must always continue. Many of the most important circumstances that surrounded the Church then have long since ceased. And if the reason upon which the thing is founded ceases, may not the thing itself abate ? To prove, therefore, that episcopacy, or prelacy, or three orders, existed in the early Church, of itself proves nothing conclusive, most manifestly.

2. Prelacy may have been established as the proper form of Church government by the apostles ; and, supposing—if we may suppose a moral impossibility—that it is best adapted to the Church, as the most available form of government under all possible circumstances, still, it does not necessarily follow that the Church cannot exist without it. The most that could be claimed from this position would be, that prelacy is the best form of government. Churches without it may, however, exist, in a defective or disadvantageous form, in some other way. This, it is well known, was the doctrine of many of the early leading Church of England divines. Among these may be named Bishop Hall, Bishop Downham, Bishop Bancroft, Bishop Andrews, Archbishop Usher, Bishop Forbes, Archbishop Wake, Bishop Hoadley, the very learned Chillingworth, Archbishops Cranmer, Grindall, Whitgift, Leighton, and Philips ; Bishops Jewell, Reynolds, Burnet,

and Croft; Doctors Whitaker, Stillingfleet, and others. They were all staunch Episcopalians, and stoutly maintained that episcopacy was the proper form of government, necessary to the *perfection*, but not to the *being* of a Church. The want of episcopacy did not destroy the Church, but rendered it less efficient: its absence was inexpedient. So that it avails nothing for the doctrine of Divine-right prelacy, to show that episcopacy was established by the apostles, unless they could prove much more to put with it.

3. And suppose we advance a step farther, and admit that episcopacy was established by the apostles, as the only valid or admitted form of Church government. Neither does this avail, in the slightest degree, for the doctrine of Divine-right prelacy, unless much more could be proved. If this were the true doctrine, then it is admitted there can be no Christianity out of the regular rule of bishops. To turn away from the bishops is to turn away from Christ. To turn away from a Church of bishops is to turn away from Christianity—is to turn away from religion—is to turn away from salvation—is to turn away from future hope.

All this is acknowledged. Then if, under any circumstances, a presbyter were to repudiate the rule and government of the regular bishops of the Church, and go away from them and set up a society, and 'call himself and his followers Christians, and preach and observe the formalities of worship, it is rebellion against the Church, it is schism, it is heresy: they are not a Church: they are not Christians; for Christianity out of Christ, and in repudiation of his laws, cannot be maintained.

But is this true? Is it true that Luther was a schismatic? that he went *out of*, and not *into*, the Church? Is it true that Protestantism is heresy? Is it true that there is no Church, no Christianity, no gospel, no religion, no hope, out of Rome? Let those contend for it who may.

Is not, then, a *supersedeas* the best plea to file in answer to the argument of Divine-right episcopacy, as drawn from the claim of three orders in the ministry?

And have not the writers on the opposite side run sometimes into error, when, in repudiating episcopacy, as an order of ministry by Divine right, and in supporting what they call parity in the ministry, they claim Divine right for the order of presbyters, or for presbyters and deacons?

If it be affirmed that bishop, elder, and presbyter be the same order and the same office, then those who do so must be consistent, and not speak of elders and presbyters as contradistinguished from bishops in any way. If it be held that presbyters, as such, have a Divine right to ordain, or that, as distinguished from bishops, they have any rights, or any existence, then we cannot at the same time hold that there is no distinction between presbyter and bishop; for that would be a contradiction.

And again: suppose we affirm, in any shape or form, with or without any qualifications, that the *right to ordain*, by Divine law, pertains to any Church officer—that is, to any particular officer in the Church: do we not thereby affirm that, to some extent at least, a form of government for the Church was Divinely established? Most assuredly we do; and our opponents have a right to require us to be consistent.

If any particular duty—ordination, for instance—was Divinely assigned, as a permanent regulation, to some particular Church officer, in contradistinction to its being performed by any other officer, then to that extent a form of government is established. For forms of government consist in the assignment of certain duties to certain officers, in contradistinction to their being assigned to some other officers, or in some other way.

In answer to this, it may be said, that if the duty of ordination be not assigned at all, to anybody, then it may be

performed, if performed at all, by anybody, laymen, women, or children.

To this it is replied, that the teachings of Christ respecting the Church consist of two things :

1. He taught that there must be a ministry distinct from the laity. The minister is the pastor : the duties of the minister are the duties of the pastor.

2. He taught that the Church must be *governed*. It must not only be governed, but it must be so governed as, in the judgment of those immediately concerned, its government will be most conducive to the strength and influence of the Church in forwarding the great designs of the gospel, and in keeping and promoting harmony and good order.

Now, when Christians can be made to believe that it is *best* for the Church, *best* for religion, that laymen or women shall ordain, and the regular pastors of the Church stand and look on, then it will be time enough to entertain this proposition. But, in the nature of the case, this can never be.

The MINISTRY was designed to be permanent ; but this does not say whether the presbyter shall or shall not perform this or that particular duty in the ministry, or what shall be the peculiar duties of bishop, or whether these distinctions in the ministry shall or shall not exist. The ministry is the *pastorate* of the Church. The Church consists in its body of people, and its pastorate. Ordination has been explained in its appropriate chapter.

The ministry was ordained by Christ to be permanent ; but whether these or those duties pertaining to the ministry should be assigned to an officer in the ministry who should be called bishop, and other and other duties be discharged by a minister to be called presbyter, and whether still other duties should or should not be discharged by still other officers, all these, and a thousand other questions pertaining to the regulation of the Church, were left to the discretion of pious men,

to be arranged from time to time as circumstances might require.

Surely different offices may be created in a common ministry. Surely different duties of ministry may be assigned to different ministers. And surely convenience will soon attach different names to these different classes of duties. An *office* in the ministry is a different thing, surely, from an *order of* ministry. The error of many is, that they mistake the one for the other, or do not distinguish between them.

If the Divine law contemplated a distinction between presbyters and bishops, there must have been, at least, an intimation of the sort in the Scriptures. But, on the contrary, there is not one word that would lead us so to conclude. There is not a word in the Scriptures, leaving *names* out of the question, that intimates that, as a standing rule, one class of ministers was to have supervisory authority over ministers and Churches. The word bishop, in the New Testament, is used to denote oversight over the flock, the Church, but never to denote oversight over ministers.

Presbyters and bishops, in the New Testament, have the same *duties* assigned them; they have the same *qualifications* attributed to them; they have the same *ordination*; they have the same *power* and authority. Some of the apostles called themselves *presbyters*, but never *bishops*.

In the apostolic Churches there were sometimes several bishops to the same Church, which shows that they could not be overseers of Churches, or prelates. No instance of a second ordination is found either in the Scriptures or in any ecclesiastical writings of early date.

Is it not absurd to suppose that a *Divine* right may be proved by something else than Divine authority?

The Fathers speak sometimes of bishops as distinguished from elders, but the distinction is, that the former was the pastor of the Church, or a mere chosen president. Jerome, one

of the most learned of these writers, who lived in the fourth century, explains this matter particularly. He says that bishop and presbyter is the same; that, to repress schism and irregularity in the Church, it was thought best to elect one of the presbyters to be bishop or overseer of the whole. And he is careful to explain that this is a human and not a Divine arrangement. Jerome's language, as carefully translated by Mr. Yerger, a very learned high Church debater, quoted from vol. 7, page 562, of the Parisian republication of the Benedictine Fathers, is as follows:

"A presbyter, therefore, is the same as a bishop; and before there were, by the devil's instigation, parties in religion, and it was said among the people, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, the Churches were governed by a common council of presbyters. Afterwards, indeed, when each thought those he baptized were his, not Christ's, it was decreed through the whole world that one chosen from the presbyters should be put above the rest, to whom all the care of the Church should belong, and the ends of schism be taken away. Should any one think it is not the view of the Scriptures, but our own, that bishop and presbyter are the same, and that one is the name of age, the other of office, let him read the words of the apostle to the Philippians," etc. See "Debate," Abbey and Yerger and Smedes, page 77.

There is not in Wake's translation of the Fathers, one word that militates against the idea that presbyter and bishop are the same order of ministers, but, on the contrary, the idea is fully sustained by several of them.

Ordination is never in the Scriptures expressly ascribed to bishops by name, though it is expressly ascribed to presbyters by name in 1 Tim. iv. 14: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given thee by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." It cannot, however, be said that bishops did not ordain, for they composed a part of the presbytery. They were the same persons as presbyters.

CHAPTER XI.

THE APOSTOLATE.

THE government of the Christian Church, as distinct from the Jewish Church, unquestionably commenced under the supervision of the twelve apostles—Matthias supplying the place of Judas.

The only question in the philosophy of Church government, with regard to the apostles, which is necessary to be introduced here, is this: 1. What constitutes an apostle? or what is meant by the office of apostle? and, 2. Whether the functions of their office were temporary and personal to themselves, and, so far as they were peculiar, whether they ceased with their lives; or whether it was a permanent office in the Church, intended to be perpetual and successive, and to remain distinct from the ordinary pastorate?

We must first determine what we mean by "*the apostles.*" Time need not be spent here in inquiring into the orthography of the word. The term originally means *messenger*; but the peculiar meaning attached to it in the Scriptures, and since, must be determined by the usages of these times and the application made of the word.

In the first place, we see that the first disciples of the Saviour, twelve in number, who it seems were chosen for a special purpose, were called apostles. It is evident from the Scriptures, that the Saviour intended these twelve men to be his special ministers and attendants; that his plan was to in-

struct them and endow them peculiarly with gifts and graces beyond the endowments of ordinary Christians ; for they were to be the founders of his Church and the prime propagators of his truths. They were called *apostles* because they were *sent* by Christ to convey his will to the world.

The term apostle is also frequently applied in the Scriptures to other persons than the *twelve*. Distinguished ministers were called apostles. Ministers of secondary and inferior note were likewise called apostles. And so were persons who were probably not preachers at all, but who were sent by the ministers or Churches as messengers to other Churches. And lastly, the founders of particular Churches, in still later years, were called apostles. There were certainly, however, some persons who were specially and peculiarly distinguished and spoken of as apostles, above other apostles, and above all other men. And the question is, By what rule are we to distinguish between apostles in this highest sense, and others to whom the term is applied ?

It is certain that Christ first called or appointed *twelve* to accompany him, and be instructed by him. And in this sense they are, officially, at least, to be preëminently distinguished. But is the term, in the high sense in which we use it, to be confined to them ? This does not seem probable, for St. Paul was not one of them ; and he “was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.”

What, then, are the essential prerequisites or qualifications of an apostle in this higher sense ?

Many writers make the test of apostleship that such person should have seen Jesus Christ personally, after his death and resurrection. We see Paul on two several occasions asserting that he had thus seen the Lord. 1 Cor. ix. 1 ; xv. 8. But surely all who saw Christ after his resurrection were not apostles ; for he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.

It seems a matter of interest to inquire into the relation

between Paul and Barnabas to the twelve; for Barnabas was an apostle in the same sense, legally, that Paul was.

And first, we must inquire whether there was any reason why the Saviour fixed upon the number *twelve*. Or was it merely because he chanced to meet with twelve suitable persons?

Mosheim tells us, "The researches of the learned have been employed to find out the reason of Christ fixing the number of apostles to *twelve*, and that of the disciples to *seventy*; and various conjectures have been applied to the solution of this question. But since it is manifest from the words of our Saviour himself—Matt. xix. 26: Luke xxii. 30—that he intended the number of the twelve apostles as an allusion to that of the tribes of Israel, it can scarcely be doubted that he was willing to insinuate by this appointment that he was the supreme Lord and high-priest of these twelve tribes into which the Jewish nation was divided. And as the number of the disciples answers evidently to that of the senators, of whom the council of the people, or the sanhedrim, was composed, there is a high degree of probability in the conjecture of those who think that Christ, by the choice of the *seventy*, designed to admonish the Jews that the authority of their sanhedrim was now at an end, and that all power, with respect to religious matters, was vested in him alone."—*Ecc. Hist.*, vol. i., page 56.

That he required *twelve* rather than any other number, seems much more than probable from the choice of Matthias in the place of Judas. This took place before they entered upon their ministry. It is the only instance in which a vacated apostolate was filled with a successor. From the time and manner of the appointment, the remarks of Peter in relation thereto, etc., it appears almost, if not quite certain, that they considered a full and proper college of apostles to consist of *twelve* ministers.

It seems, then, that there is a peculiar and high sense in which the term apostle is applied to these *twelve* disciples. They were the prime ministers of Christ. The conversion of the world is the fruit of *their* preaching, instrumentally and exclusively. The entire of Christendom beside rests upon them. All other ministers and all other Christians came in afterward to assist in *carrying forward* what they *began*. They, and none others, founded Christianity under Christ. He “ordained twelve;” one transgressed and fell, and the eleven filled the vacant place, and the twelve began the warfare.

But there is another sense in which the office of apostle is to be regarded; for there were persons other than these twelve who acted a very prominent part in the establishment of early Christianity, and who appear to have been quite equal to them in every respect in this great work; in fact, the most prominent and efficient of those generally called apostles, so far as we know, were not of the twelve.

In undertaking to determine what are the specific functions of an apostle, in the high and primary sense in which that term is generally used, we must determine the relation subsisting between the twelve apostles, on the one hand, and Paul, Barnabas, and perhaps others, on the other hand.

The twelve were the founders of Christianity. They commenced preaching the *gospel*—the good news of salvation by Christ—before the Christian *religion* was introduced into the world. For the religion of Christianity, properly speaking, must date at the descent of the Holy Ghost. This took place, however, very shortly after the apostles commenced preaching. And the spread of Christianity followed wider and wider, never to cease its flow. About two years after this, we hear of Saul of Tarsus as a persecutor of the Christians. He is first mentioned as aiding and abetting at the martyrdom of Stephen. Some time after, we hear of his miraculous conversion: then

of his preaching; and then he is spoken of as an *apostle*; then he is the great apostle of the Gentiles; and his brilliant and glorious career which follows enters largely into the history of early Christianity. He was the intimate friend and associate of the *twelve*—nay, he was their leader. Considering the four Gospels as but repeated histories of the same events, St. Paul is the author of almost one full half of the New Testament Scriptures. The Christian, in looking back over the early history of the Church and the foundation of his faith and hope, sees, first, THE SAVIOUR; next, ST. PAUL, and next, Peter and his eleven original associates. Truly, Paul was the very chiefest of the apostles.

Was Barnabas an apostle? He has generally been so considered by ecclesiastical writers, but some are not willing to give him the preëminence which they award to Paul, or to the twelve. But does this inferiority, as respects Paul, attach to Barnabas in any *legal* sense? It is very certain he did not acknowledge any superior *authority* in Paul, nor did the latter claim any over him. Acts xv. 36–41.

Here it is plainly seen that there was no sort of official disparity between them. Barnabas is expressly called an apostle in Acts xiv. 14. In Acts xiv. 23, the ordination of elders is expressly attributed to Barnabas, in conjunction with Paul. In Acts xv. 12, miracles are expressly attributed to him. His fame as a great and powerful minister of the gospel stands out in the inspired history of the early Church beyond that of most of the apostles. He introduced Paul to the twelve apostles at Jerusalem, and entirely changed their views with regard to him; for they still believed him a persecutor of the Church, notwithstanding he had been preaching several years. See Acts ix. 26, 27. It was Barnabas, also, who sought out Paul, or Saul, as he was then called, and brought him to Antioch, to assist him in preaching to the Gentiles at that place. Paul, it will be noticed, was called Saul until the time of his

regular ordination to the ministry, which took place at Antioch after he had been preaching several years.

The following observations may, it would seem, at least be safely made :

1. It was manifestly necessary, humanly speaking, in the origin of Christianity, that some persons should be supernaturally endowed, as the special servants of Christ, with such extraordinary powers as would fit them for the peculiar work of setting the machinery of the Christian religion agoing. How could it be done otherwise?

2. For some reasons, of which we are not informed, the Saviour called and endowed for this purpose *twelve* men, in contradistinction to any other number. We may suppose that this number was fixed upon in reference to the Jewish polity—to intimate to the Jews that he was the high-priest of the *twelve* rulers or divisions of the ecclesiastical polity. That the number had some reference to the Jewish polity is pretty certain; but it seems quite certain that there was something in that particular number which rendered it expedient above any other number, from the fact that it was kept full by special appointment before the ministry commenced.

3. We conclude, then, that a regular proper college of apostles must consist of twelve ministers in the *opening* of the Christian campaign. At least, this was the fact.

4. In the course of the ministry of these apostles, and not over about three years after its commencement, a very extraordinary convert to Christianity was found among the disciples. St. Paul was a great man—great before his conversion—great afterwards. He occupied a large space in the public eye as a civilian, and as a Christian. The Church appeared to stand in great need of just such a man as he was. He was the most capable among the ministry to cope with the learned Greeks and Romans, and sustain the truths of the gospel in the face of the literati of the world. He went to preaching immedi-

ately, but was not recognized by the apostles, or by the Church—except, possibly, a small portion of it—even as a disciple, for several years afterwards. At some time, not probably more than six or seven years after his conversion, he was endowed with supernatural gifts, equal, so far as we know, to those of the twelve apostles. And he, in a few years, assumed the title of apostle, and was generally connected with the apostles.

5. The title of apostle, however, seems to have been attached to all the first ministers until the Church considerably increased. Barnabas has been considered an apostle—certain it is Paul so considered him—and, as above remarked, he appeared, so far as official powers were concerned, to rank equally with Paul or any of the apostles. In truth, for some time he was the leader of Paul.

Now, several questions arise with regard to the apostolate of St. Paul.

Did he officially differ from the twelve; and, if so, in what respects?

It may not be found so easy as some may imagine to point out the precise legal distinction. He differed from them in this, that he was not one of the original twelve. He came in afterwards in the course of the Church's progress; though he was certainly equal to any of them in any kind of spiritual endowment.

Was Paul superior, and in what respects, to Barnabas?

As a man of moral force, he was not only superior to Barnabas, but to almost any man, whose history has come down to us, then living. But does the Bible in any way inform us that legally, officially, he was his superior?

Then, what is an apostle? Where is the precise line which separates between a man who was and a man who was not an apostle?

After leaving the twelve, and the legal distinction between

them and all others, there does not appear to be any precise legal distinction, so far as we know, so far as the apostolate is concerned, between the first or early ministers, before the increase of the Churches became considerable.

Then, if it be said that ministers are successors of the apostles, we ask, of what apostles? Of the twelve exclusively? or, if St. Paul is to be included, what others are to be included also?

We speak of "the apostles"—Paul being one of them—without reflecting that he was not one of the twelve, and without reflecting that if you include him, in a legal and official sense, you must also include, no man can tell who or how many besides. For beyond the twelve the Bible makes no precise point to stop at.

Then, how does the nature of the case admit of a succession to the apostolate, in any other sense than as a minister of the gospel? There is nothing *else* to succeed to except that which is in its nature personal and incidental. There is no succession to the twelve as being the chosen and sent and instructed, and first planters of Christianity. St. Paul was not an apostle in this sense.

And if it be said that there is a succession to the apostolate in the sense of their being the first bishops or governors of the Churches, the difficulty is that St. Paul was not one of these, and to include him you must go out of the college of the twelve; and if you go out of the college of the twelve, you must include many others, as Barnabas, Luke, Mark, and others, who do not appear to have been governors of Churches. There is no sense in which supervisorship of Churches can be said to be a distinct apostolic function. It was a function of all the twelve, and of St. Paul besides; but was it not a function of other apostles outside of the twelve?

There is a sense in which it might be said that men succeed to the duties of these thirteen men—the twelve original

apostles and St. Paul. But this cannot be said to be a succession to apostolic functions; for it is neither confined to the twelve, nor does it include all other apostles outside of the twelve. There is no strictly legal and official sense in which St. Paul and none others, outside of the twelve, is to be included in the apostolic college. In any strictly legal or official sense in which there were thirteen apostles, there may have been fourteen, or fifteen, or perhaps twenty.

Thus it is seen that though it could be established that the functions of the apostles could in their nature descend to other ministers, nothing is gained by it to the high-Churchman for the lack of some distinctive peculiar apostolic endowments which were confined to the original twelve.

We are aware that there is difference of opinion among able theologians on the question whether there were or were not some special legal endowments conferred on the twelve, or on the twelve and two or three others who are supposed to have been put into the apostolate to fill vacancies in the college, and which no other ministers enjoyed. But wherever the truth may lie, the doctrine of a succession to the apostolate has nothing to gain. If there was such a legal distinction confined to a college, then it may not be looked for out of it. And if not, then the supposed succession lacks a distinct foundation.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRACTICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN BISHOP AND
PRESBYTER.

WORDS are the signs of ideas. It is seldom indeed that two words are used to mean *precisely* the same thing in all the several senses in which they are used. If it were so, one of them would soon fall into disuse.

When it is said that bishop and presbyter are the same, it is not or ought not to be intended to mean that they are the same in every sense. The terms are unquestionably used synonymously in the Scriptures, for both terms are used at the same time, in the same sense, in relation to the same persons. It is now admitted freely on all hands that in the days of the apostles the terms *bishop* and *elder*, or *presbyter*, were used synonymously and interchangeably. They were names applied to *ministers*—to all Christian ministers.

Paul, in writing to Titus, chap. i., says: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly; for a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God," etc. Here the same name, *bishop* and *elder*, are applied in the same sentence to the same persons. Several other passages prove, beyond question, the same thing. Testimony need not be

multiplied to prove that, however, which is on all hands admitted.

The term bishop means overseer, superintendent, or inspector, as any one may see in a moment, by consulting a dictionary or lexicon. *Elder* means older—senior in age. The early practice of selecting the oldest and most grave and experienced, to fill offices requiring supervisorship and great prudence, caused a corresponding transfer of the meaning of the word so as to apply it directly to the office. In this sense the word was commonly used among the Jews. “In the first Christian Churches, *elders* were persons who enjoyed office or ecclesiastical functions; and the word includes apostles, pastors, teachers, presbyters, bishops, or overseers.”—*Webster*.

“Presbyter: in the primitive Church an elder, a person somewhat advanced in age, who had authority in the Church, and whose duty it was to feed the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made him overseer.”—*Webster*.

“Bishop: *in the primitive Church*, a spiritual overseer; an elder or presbyter; one who had the pastoral care of a Church.”—*Webster*.

It is seen, therefore, at a glance, that these words were used almost, if not quite, synonymously in the primitive Church.

Now, the question is, in what way, to what extent, and in what sense, did there come to be a distinction between them? This question is very easy to answer, it would seem, entirely to the satisfaction of all.

There never has been, to this day, any distinction in the use of the words presbyter and elder. As to the term bishop, the change in its signification in later years, in common parlance, came about in this way:

Nothing is more natural or certain than that, in the progress of Christianity, the formation of Churches, and the extension of the ministry, there would be found more than

one elder, bishop, or presbyter in the same Church or pastoral charge. Some one of them must necessarily be the pastor; and, of course, in this respect he would be distinguished from the others. His duties become different from the duties of another presbyter or bishop who had not the pastoral charge. This circumstance, which is merely adventitious and incidental, so far as concerns the office in question, and which must certainly occur in almost every part of the Church, at once creates a marked and visible distinction between the different persons holding the office of elder, presbyter, or bishop. The elder who has the charge of the congregation or church, as its pastor, has, of course, charge also of the other elders as their pastor.

How the selection of one of these ministers—in places where there was more than one—would be made, is another question which has already been noticed. But that it must in some way be made, and thus a distinction be created between ministers in respect to this thing, is apparent.

Now, nothing is more natural than that the pastor-bishop should soon become known by some name that would distinguish him from bishops who were not pastors. And so the term *bishop*, in process of years, came to be applied uniformly to the pastor, and was disused as to other bishops.

And hence Lord King says :

“Whether in the apostolic days there were more bishops than one in a Church, at first sight seems difficult to resolve. That the Holy Scriptures and Clemens Romanus mention many in one Church is certain. And, on the other hand, it is as certain that Ignatius, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the following Fathers affirm that there was, and ought to be, but one in a Church. These contradictions may, at first view, seem inextricable; but I hope the following account will reconcile all these seeming difficulties, and withal afford us a

fair and easy conception of the difference between the ancient bishops and presbyters.”—*Primitive Church*, p. 27.

Again he says : “The titles of this superior Church officer are, most of them, reckoned up in one place by Cyprian, which are, ‘bishop, president, pastor, governor, superintendent, and priest.’”—P. 29.

Again : “Having in the former chapter shown that there was but one bishop to a Church, we shall in this evidence that there was but one Church to a bishop; which will appear from this single consideration, viz., that the ancient dioceses are never said to contain Churches, in the plural, but only a Church, in the singular.”—P. 30.

The very learned author then goes on to explain extensively, by quoting from all the prominent theological writers of those days, that such a thing was not known as a bishop having oversight over more than one congregation. He was the pastor of the Church. The same author remarks, in another place, “Consequently a bishop, having but one parish under his jurisdiction, could extend his government no farther than one single congregation, because a single congregation and a parish were all one, of the same bulk and magnitude.”—P. 32.

A Church to a bishop; a bishop to a Church. A bishop—that is, the pastor—was selected from the body of elders; the same precisely as is the case now everywhere. A Church was one single Church. The Churches began more closely and distinctly to federate and form alliances among themselves, for mutual advantage and protection, in process of time. Those of the four largest ancient Churches, namely, Antioch, Rome, Carthage, and Alexandria, remained in their single, separate congregational form for three hundred years.—*Primitive Church*, p. 43.

The same distinguished author, who by the way was one

of the most learned men in oriental theology and Church history that England ever produced, and labored perhaps more extensively than any other man in searching into the records of these and kindred questions, describes a presbyter to be, "a person in holy orders, having thereby an inherent right to perform the whole office of a bishop; but being possessed of no place or parish, nor actually discharging it, without the permission and consent of the bishop of a place or parish."

When the office of bishop became vacant from any cause, the most usual mode of filling it was by popular election, by the whole Church, ministers and members.—Primitive Church, pp. 37, 55. (Explained and proved by reference to numerous authorities, and the recital of many elections of the sort in those days.)

This explanation of the offices of bishop, presbyter, and elder, is not contradicted by any respectable authority whatever, so far as I have been able to learn.

The relation of these ministers was thus the same anciently as it is now, understanding the term *bishop* to mean the pastor, or overseer, or minister of a congregation or Church. This was called parochial episcopacy. The episcopacy of the present day, which is a general or diocesan superintendency, is another thing, which has been already explained.

The confederacy of Churches in later ages, and which is now very prevalent throughout the best portions of Christendom, has rendered it expedient, in the judgment of most of these Churches, or some of them, to establish episcopacy as it is described by Jerome, in the fourth century, to have existed in and before his day. He says the whole Church determined that "one chosen from among the presbyters should be put above the rest, to whom all the care of the Church should belong."

This superintendent, or presiding elder, or presbyter, now

took the name of *bishop*, and the ordinary pastors of the Churches were called presbyters or elders, and they have been so called ever since. The bishop is the chief or superintending pastor. The elder or presbyter is the immediate pastor of the single congregation. The pastorate, however, is not necessary to the office of elder. There are many positions in the Church which he may occupy without being a pastor, though the pastorate is the more regular duty of a presbyter or elder.

The term *priest* is sometimes very improperly applied to the office of elder or presbyter. The *priest* is not a minister of the gospel. Under the gospel economy, Christ is the only priest. The priest offers sacrifice for the people.

Thus it seems that the material out of which the long controversy respecting bishops and presbyters has grown is extremely scanty, and lies in a nutshell. The prelatical notions which throw so much ecclesiastical and apostolic dignity about the "bishop," were first got up in England, in the early part of the seventeenth century, by Archbishop Laud, a prelate of great pride, ambition, and bigotry; and the notion of such dignity is so consoling to the pampered pride and ambition of ruling officials, such as we find frequently, or always, in the proud and worldly Church of England, that no labor or pains have been lost in giving the doctrine aid and notoriety.

PART THREE.

The Apostolic Succession.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUESTION IN ISSUE.

THE question of episcopacy, as held by high Church Episcopalians—or of prelacy, as, perhaps, it might be more properly called—on the one hand, and of presbyterial Church government, as it is usually called, on the other, is easily stated to the entire satisfaction of all; for, so far as I know, all agree as to the grounds occupied on either side.

The question relates to *Church government* and *ministerial authority*. On the side of high Church episcopacy it is held, 1st, that the Saviour and his apostles established the episcopal form of government for the Church of Christ, in all time—that the Saviour directed this to be the form, and the only form, and the apostles so organized and conducted and left it; and that this form has been strictly maintained in the Church ever since.

2d. That the Church was also Divinely instituted with *three orders* in the ministry—the bishop, the presbyter, and the deacon; and that the right to ordain and govern the Churches, with their respective elders and deacons, inheres specifically and exclusively in the bishop, or first order.

3d. That the authority, and the only authority, to minister the gospel on earth, or which ever did exist, once resided in Jesus Christ. That he personally delegated this authority to his apostles after his resurrection, and shortly previous to his ascension; and that in this commission he authorized them to vest it in others, and they others, and so on, by ordination, successively from person to person, to the end of time. That this power to ordain inheres in bishops alone, as the proper and legal successors of the apostles, exclusive of other ministers.

4th. That this succession of ordinations has been, in fact, perpetually kept up to the present time, in a line of bishops from these apostles so personally commissioned; which commission is written in the last chapter of Matthew, from the sixteenth to the twentieth verses inclusive. That this ministerial authority so handed down personally, from bishop to bishop, constitutes the legality and spiritual vitality of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, the Church of England, and some other Churches.

5th. Hence it follows, they hold that any supposed ministers, not ordained by bishops in this unbroken line of ordinations, are not ministers of the gospel at all; and are not even laymen, unless they belong to the pastoral charge of a regular minister who is so ordained, and have been baptized by a minister so in orders, and have been confirmed by a legal bishop—that all supposed Churches, or associations of Christians, not under the pastoral charge of a minister thus duly authorized, and a bishop, are no Churches at all, but are mere unauthorized human associations, entirely unprotected by the covenanted mercies of God—legally they are of the world, for the Church of Christ is exclusively defined and bounded as above.

It is desired, right here, to make two observations, which can hardly fail to challenge the reader's attention.

It is strange, it is very strange indeed, that, *first*, the above doctrines have been held, more or less, in the Church for the last two and a half centuries, by many divines of considerable learning, and are this day the sentiments of men of talents; and, *secondly*, the difficulty we find in refuting them is met with in their excessive feebleness. Their almost entire want of logical substance, presenting almost nothing to brace an argument against, is honestly and faithfully believed to be its greatest means of defence.

It cannot fail to be seen at a glance how plainly and directly these views come in conflict with the principles, and with almost all the facts, pertaining to the primitive Church, which are set forth in the first part of this work, and which principles are in their nature unquestionable, and which facts are not, for the most part, such as have been heretofore controverted by opposing writers on Church government.

And if the following observations are found to fall short of *demonstration*, nay, if they do not show *conclusively* in the sequel that there is no debatable question in issue, then they may be regarded a failure, and be treated accordingly.

All this could be done, and perfectly done, in a single chapter of ten or a dozen pages, but it is thought best to spread the matter a little more fully before the reader. He will, therefore, be so good as to exercise a little patience, while we proceed somewhat at leisure.

Although the doctrine in question, when looked fairly *into*, is so entirely baseless as not to be able to present a logical issue, yet in the manner in which it is presented by shrewd and gifted men, and without the helps which we will endeavor to furnish the reader, it is made to appear quite plausible; and really it is, upon the whole, doing much harm to Christianity. It ought to be, it must be, understood.

And before we go farther, let the reader understand the difference between a succession of ordinations coming down

from the apostles, in a line of bishops, as contradistinguished from presbyters, and a succession lying in the latter, or in the ministry in common. In either case the doctrine itself is the same, if intended to be strictly adhered to; though men might differ as to whether it should be confined to bishops, or be common in the ordained ministry.

We cannot consistently oppose *the doctrine* of apostolic succession, and then say that succession must be in the ministry, and need not be confined to bishops. We cannot say that ministers, call them presbyters or bishops, have the *exclusive Divine right* to ordain as between themselves and Christ, themselves and the Church, and as between Christ and the Church, and at the same time oppose the doctrine of apostolic succession; for that is apostolic succession in presbyters, or in presbyters and bishops indiscriminately. *The doctrine*, if opposed at all, must be opposed *in toto*. Those who choose to do so, can debate whether the line of succession ought or ought not to be confined to bishops, contradistinguished from presbyters.

This point has been, perhaps, sufficiently explained in a previous chapter on ordination.

We shall in the following strictures be confined to the doctrine of succession in bishops, as there, and there only, it is openly and avowedly held to lie.

CHAPTER II.

IRRELEVANT QUESTIONS.

THE question of apostolic succession naturally divides itself into the two following propositions :

First. Does the theory of Christianity require, absolutely, in order to the existence of a ministry and a Church, that the former be kept alive by an unbroken succession of ordinations, and in no other way? And,

Secondly. Has the unbroken chain of succession of ordinations been actually kept up, all along down the history of the Church to the present day?

Of course, both these propositions must be specifically proved. To prove the former and fail in the latter, would be the greatest of all possible human disasters. For then we have no Church, no ministry of Jesus Christ upon the earth ; that is, we have no proof that either exists. And nothing can be said to exist without proper adequate proof. If the theory of Christianity requires a succession of ordinations in an unbroken chain, in order to the existence of a Church, and if, on further examination, it be found that there is *no* proof that such a succession of ordinations has been maintained in the history of the Church, then, of course, there is *no* evidence in the world of the existence of a Church of Christ.

Then it must be proved that the theory of Christianity

requires this personal, tactual succession of ordinations. And it must be proved historically that this has been done.

But if the attempt has ever been made to prove, directly, either one of these simple natural propositions into which the question obviously divides itself, I have never been able to see the argument. From a course of somewhat thorough reading on the subject, it is the belief of the writer that this has *never been attempted*.

But in the stead thereof, other questions have been brought forward. One of these, and quite a favorite one, is the question of **THREE ORDERS** in the ministry.

It appears to have been taken for granted—from what logical premises or deductions it is certainly difficult to determine—that if it could be established that the Church, at first, had three orders in the ministry, the apostolic succession would follow of logical necessity. It is beyond the power of logic, and most likely beyond the power of history, to ascertain how this idea ever obtained either birth or currency. But so it is.

It is quite certain that the apostolic succession, as held to lie in a line of bishops, cannot be maintained without establishing the doctrine of the three orders. But it is likewise quite as certain, that the three orders may be established, and the doctrine of succession be left without a feather of support.

Suppose the *three orders* were established. It still remains to be proved that it was the *permanent law* of the Church. Perhaps it would only prove that it would be best to have three orders in the ministry; that the Church would do better in that way; that it was necessary to the perfection, but not to the being of a Church. To prove, if it could be proved, that at the first there were three orders in the ministry, of itself proves, obviously, nothing conclusive on the subject of the apostolic succession.

But still, notwithstanding this plain, simple, and natural conclusion, a very large proportion of the debates in the books,

which claim to discuss the question of apostolic succession, merely argue the simple *fact* whether, at the first, there were, or were not, *three orders* in the ministry. Surely this is a question of no importance, by itself considered, in examining the question of succession.

As to the doctrine of three orders, it is in itself, as a question pertaining to ecclesiastical government, by no means unimportant. It has been hereinbefore discussed in its appropriate place.

Again, probably a full half or more of all the debates in this country and England, which claim to be on the question of the apostolic succession, after deducting those almost endless strictures which are merely personal between the combatants, are on the question of EPISCOPACY. The books, volume after volume, are full of it. They debate the bare simple question whether at the first, the government of the Church was or was not episcopal.

It would not do to say that the question of episcopacy has no connection whatever with that of the succession; but it will do to say, and it must be said, that the relation is remote and contingent.

It is very true that the high-Churchman is bound to establish episcopacy, not only as the form of the government of the first Churches, but much more with regard to it, before he can *begin* his argument on succession. He must, of course, prove that bishops *existed*, as a first or highest order of ministers, the legal governors of Churches, before he can prove that succession existed and descended in them. But to prove that they *existed*, as the rulers of the Church, at the first, and ever since, is certainly, of itself, proving nothing whatever about apostolic succession. If this could be done, he has merely established the *possibility* of his being able to commence an argument on apostolic succession; but he has certainly, as yet, not proceeded one inch with this latter question.

The question of episcopacy, as a matter of the polity of Churches, and the structure of the ministry, is certainly important, and has been examined in an appropriate place in a former chapter. But the necessity of an elaborate discussion of episcopacy in order to get at the question of apostolic succession, I have not been able to discover. It is certainly, however, a fine stroke of policy in the high-Church debater to call off his opponent into any irrelevant question. The farther he can get from *the* question into a deep-water discussion of some other question, the better, certainly, for him.

Again, a large portion of the controversy respecting apostolic succession, or which claims to be such, relates to the writings of the Fathers. We shall have occasion to refer to these authors in a future chapter, and need only now remark, that extensive arguments are made by high-Churchmen to prove that these Fathers, in very early ages of the Church, spoke of the Churches as being under the charge or control of bishops. All this, however, proves nothing about either apostolic succession or Church government. For it is admitted on all hands that, in these early ages, the term *bishop* was applied to the same office as *elder* or *presbyter*. Hence, as the term as used then did not refer to the office of bishop, as we use the word now, by the custom of years, the proof amounts obviously to nothing.

There are other irrelevant matters which high-Church writers lug into this debate, that may perhaps be alluded to hereafter. In fact, the debates in whole, on that side, are almost wholly irrelevant to the vital question in issue.

We can therefore very safely admit all they wish to prove on these points, true or untrue. For, in debating any specific question, we can well afford to admit *any thing* on any *other* question.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRANSMISSION OF AUTHORITY.

JESUS CHRIST introduced and taught the precepts and truths of religion eighteen hundred years ago. Since that day he has not been spoken to, face to face, by man, nor has he thus spoken to man. The words which he spoke out of his mouth at that time, constitute the law, and the whole law, of Christianity. These words are personally binding upon all men. And nothing else than these words are personally binding on any man, as a matter of religious faith.

Now, the question is, How are we, at this day, to receive the words of Christ thus spoken, in order to be bound by them?

There are two, and but two, conceivable modes. In the one case, they may have been *spoken* to men, and then re-spoken, on and on, and so transmitted traditionally to this day, and now spoken to us. Or, they may have been *written* and handed down to us in a book.

Now, it is the doctrine of all Christian Churches on earth, except Romanists—if they are to be considered a Church—that the only binding authority upon Christians, at this day, is contained in the written Scriptures. At all events, we are certainly bound by the authority of the Scriptures. And the question is, whether we are bound by authority outside of the Scriptures. If so, then such authority must be in *opposition* to, or in *addition* to, that which is in the Scriptures. For,

if it be the *same* as that in the Scriptures, that is the same as saying we are bound by the Scriptures, which all men admit. But the question is, in regard to the binding force of authority *out* of the Scriptures.

It is plain that we cannot be bound by authority out of the Scriptures which is in opposition thereto. But can we be bound by authority out of the Scriptures which is merely in addition to the Scriptures?

Authority transmitted to us from man to man, traditionally or historically, out of the Scriptures, is that which is supposed to reside in *bishops*, in virtue of their ordination, which came down successively from man to man. It came down alongside of the Scriptures, but not in them. Let us look at it a moment.

It claims to have power from Christ to do certain things; for instance, to ordain ministers, to govern—that is, to issue binding commands to the Churches—that is, to persons composing the Churches. It must therefore claim infallibility, for no authority was ever supposed or claimed to be binding on Christians which is not infallible.

Then the doctrine of transmitted authority, in the Church, from minister to minister, and which is supposed to be binding upon men, is simply the doctrine of Church infallibility; which is the essence of Romanism, and the only essential feature which distinguishes Romanism from Christianity.

Nothing can be more clear than the impossibility of setting aside this argument. Here is a bishop who claims to exercise authority from Christ. How did he obtain this authority? Not directly from the written Scriptures; but from another bishop, who ordained him. And he received his authority in the same way; and so on, and on, back, in a chain of successive ordinations, to Christ. This authority, therefore, came down otherwise than in the written Scriptures. And if it be binding upon men, it is infallible. And so the channel of

transmission—the bishops—is an infallible channel; the Church is infallible.

And if this authority in bishops, so transmitted in a line of bishops, should, in the opinions of fallible men, seem to vary from the Scriptures, the latter must of course give way; for authority to govern Christians is authority to construe the Scriptures, and such construction will, of course, be in conformity to the authority claimed. So here we have Church authority, Church infallible authority, as clear, perfect, and distinct as Romanism does or can claim.

We have more to say on this subject in a future chapter. It is desired here only to contrast the two modes of transmitting authority down the current of time, from the only source of authority to living Christians, and to show that the written Scriptures must either be laid aside, as authority supremely binding upon Christians, or they must be regarded as the *only* proper channel of transmission of authority, and Christians must go directly to this authority for all binding obligations.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCRIPTURES.

THERE is not, nor is it pretended by any one that there is, one word, *pro* or *con*, in the Scriptures, on the subject of apostolic succession, or which in any way directly relates to it. This is the only instance in the whole range of theological or ecclesiastical controversy, where both the affirmation and denial are not claimed, at least, to be based in the words of Scripture. The only use that is attempted to be made of the Scriptures in this controversy is to prove something about *episcopacy*, as a form of Church government; and that there were originally *three orders* in the ministry. But we have already seen that proofs of episcopacy and of three orders do not, of themselves, separately or conjointly considered, *touch* the question of apostolic succession. And we have also seen in the first part the true nature of Church government, and of orders.

It would seem that any alleged doctrine of Christianity ought to find some support in the Scriptures; but this does not, nor is it pretended by any one that it does, except in the indirect and far-fetched manner above alluded to.

The only text of Scripture which is ever brought prominently forward, and which is supposed to relate to the question in hand, is the last three verses of the last chapter of Matthew, as follows :

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, (the eleven apos-

bles,) saying, All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

From this text it is inferred that ordinations in the Church must invariably be confined to bishops : that the Church cannot exist in the absence of such ordinations ; and that no ministers are Christian ministers who are not thus ordained.

This is certainly the most extraordinary instance of party and sectarian prepossession to be found, probably, within the range of religious debate and difference of opinion. So far from proving any of these things, it is not even remotely intimated in the passage that ordination, at all, is a Christian doctrine. With precisely equal propriety—and with precisely no propriety at all—it might be argued that it proves that deacons must ordain ; or that civil rulers must ordain. How can it prove any thing on a subject which is not in the remotest degree alluded to, or which is not in the passage supposed even to have been heard of ? This is not an attempt to *construe* Scripture ; it is an attempt to *make* Scripture.

Again : it is supposed that the instruction given by St. Paul to Timothy and Titus, concerning what they were respectively to do by way of supervision of the Churches in Ephesus and Crete, proves that Timothy and Titus were bishops. And suppose it does. What does *that* prove respecting the apostolic succession ? Why, manifestly nothing.

Let it be remembered that the doctrine of the apostolic succession is this : 1. The theory of Christianity requires an uninterrupted succession of ordinations in bishops, in order to the continued existence of a ministry and a Church. 2. Such a succession has actually been preserved. This is the most ground and the least ground it can possibly occupy.

Now, suppose Timothy and Titus were bishops. What does that fact prove respecting either one of these propositions? It might just as well be said that it proves some geographical proposition respecting the country of Palestine. There is not the slightest logical relation between the premise and the conclusion.

But what do the instructions of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus prove respecting episcopal functions in the latter? They prove, demonstrably, *the very opposite* of what is claimed. What is the nature of the epistles of Paul to these two evangelists—or whatever official name any one chooses to give them? They are letters of *instruction*, of *teachings*, of *command*, of *authority*, giving *directions* and exhortations as to what they were to do, and how they were to *behave* themselves as discreet and prudent ministers. In these epistles, the spirit of Christian meekness, of brotherly love and affection, is, in a most sublime and masterly manner, mingled with the spirit of authority and command.

Let the reader turn to these epistles. In the *first*, see chapters iii. 14, 15; iv. 14–16; v. 19–23; vi. 11–14, 20. In 2 Timothy, let him see chaps. ii. 1, 2; iv. 1, 2, 21. In Titus, chaps. i. 5; ii. 1–7; iii. 9. Listen to the great apostle: “I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.” “Lay hands suddenly on no man.”

Is ever such language as this addressed *to* a bishop? Does a bishop thus *receive* the mandates of a superior? A bishop of the prelatical stamp is himself a prelate. He himself is the governor of ministers and Churches. He commands others. He does not himself receive instructions, such as we see all through these epistles.

What the duties were which were performed by Timothy

and Titus is another question. That they exercised supervisory authority and care over these newly formed Churches, and among these almost uninitiated Christians, is never disputed. But were they bishops of the order of prelates? The personal instructions, directions, commands, under which they discharged these duties, as issued by another, most peremptorily and conclusively forbid such an idea.

This chapter, therefore, need not be lengthened. The doctrine of apostolic succession is the affirmative side of the argument. We deny its truth, and wait for the proof. We receive no testimony from the Scriptures. In such instances as they are alluded to, they testify on the other side.

CHAPTER V.

THE FATHERS.

CHRISTIAN writers, who lived and wrote from the days of the apostles, on to the fourth or fifth century, are called, by way of honor or distinction, *Fathers*. Among the learned in more modern ages, there has been considerable difference of opinion with regard to these writings. In the first place, a great many epistles, essays, and books have been attributed to these men, which have been ascertained to be forgeries. Others are considered of doubtful authority; and very few are, on all hands, among the learned, acknowledged to be genuine.

There has also been some difference of opinion in regard to the men themselves. Some of them appear to have been men of learning and talents, and pretty well acquainted with the Christian religion for their opportunity; while others exhibited but very moderate parts, were quite superstitious, and seem to have been led astray by religious whims and queer notions. They were mostly, however, believed to be men of undaunted and undoubted piety.

These Fathers are almost the sole witnesses relied upon by high-Churchmen to prove apostolic succession. In regard to their testimony, we must make one or two observations touching the matter generally.

Such of their writings as are known to be genuine, furnish the best testimony as to historic facts belonging to the Church

in their respective ages, which we have. Their opinions are, of course, no better than the opinions of other men. Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, were contemporary with the apostles, or some of them, for a very short time, and had, no doubt, therefore, opportunities of learning some things in regard to religion directly from them, so far as personal intercourse afforded opportunity.

Secondly, I have never seen, in any writings attributed to them, a paragraph, or sentence, or part of a sentence, on the subject of a chain of successive ordinations in the Church, either for the purpose of preserving the Church's being, or for any other purpose. If any one of them ever wrote a word on this subject, *pro* or *con*, I have never read it in their writings, or seen it quoted, or attempted to be quoted, from them.

They frequently speak of the *bishop* as having charge of the particular Church about which they are speaking. And they as frequently—nay, much more frequently—use the term *presbyter*, or *elder*, in the same way.

It may be inquired, then, How, or in what way, are their writings brought forward to prove the succession? This question is more easily asked than answered. Perhaps a little light may be gathered from the following circumstance or similar ones.

In 1844, Dr. Chapman, of Lexington, Ky., published a volume of "Sermons upon the Church," to prove apostolic succession. His fifth sermon is devoted to the testimony of the Fathers. His sixth commences on this wise:

"I cannot but flatter myself that the last discourse delivered upon these words, presented the most clear and invincible testimony from the primitive Fathers, of the Divine origin of our episcopal ministry; a ministry comprehending the three distinct orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Had it been necessary, I could have extracted volumes of evidence of a precisely similar import."

Now, I have read that discourse alluded to, carefully, and I affirm that it does not contain one word, or one idea, on the subject of, or in any way relating to, the Divine origin of any thing, so far as any sentiments attributed to the Fathers are concerned.

These are the kinds of *arguments* we have to deal with.

The quotations from the Fathers which are considered the strongest, and are most relied upon by the high-Churchmen to prove apostolic succession, shall be faithfully copied below. We can make room for but few, but they shall be the best, carefully selected, such as it is believed any high-Churchman would prefer.

The following is quoted by Dr. Chapman and others from Ignatius :

“Seeing then I have been judged worthy to see you by Damos, your most excellent bishop ; and by your very worthy presbyters, Bassas and Apollonius, and by my fellow-servant, Sotio the deacon, in whom I rejoice, forasmuch as he is subject unto his bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ.”

Again : “I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a Divine concord ; your bishop presiding in the place of God ; your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles ; and your deacons ; most dear to me, being intrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.”

The following language is attributed to Irenæus :

“We reckon up those who were instituted bishops in the Churches by the apostles and their successors, even unto us ; to whom also they committed the Churches themselves ; for they desired those to be exceeding perfect and irreproachable whom they left successors, delivering up to them their own place and mastership.” “The blessed apostles therefore founding and instructing the Church (of Rome,) delivered to Linus the episcopal office of ruling the Church.”

The following is quoted from Clement of Alexandria :

“There are other precepts without number, which concern men in particular capacities ; some of which relate to presbyters, others which belong to bishops, and others respecting deacons.”

The following is quoted from Cyprian :

“What danger of offending the Lord ought we not to fear, when some of the presbyters, neither mindful of the gospel nor of their own place, neither regarding the future judgment of the Lord nor the bishop now set over them, challenge entirely to themselves, with haughty speech and contempt of their superior, what was never done at all under our predecessors.”

From Jerome they quote the following :

“What Aaron, and his sons, and the Levites were in the temple, the same, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, may claim to themselves in the Church.” And in another place, “What does a bishop do which a presbyter may not do, except ordination?”

The “invincible testimony” supposed to be contained in these extracts is found in the fact that the writers speak of *bishops*, and of *presbyters*, and of *deacons*, separately and distinctly.

Every whit, however, of the supposed testimony, so far as it regards any questions here in issue, vanishes the moment we consider that, whatever construction we give their language, or whatever we may suppose them to mean by the terms bishop, presbyter, and elder, they do not in the slightest degree intimate that this distinction arises from any *Divine* command or arrangement. They only speak of the distinction as *existing*. The same distinction exists now, in many of the non-prelatical Churches of the present day.

The question is not, whether these distinctions in the names or duties of ministers existed, at any particular time ; but

whether they existed in virtue of *Divine command*, or an arrangement of *the Churches*.

No one acquainted with the subject ever denied for a moment that bishop and presbyter may be spoken of distinctly and separately. This is not the question. The question is, whether, by command of Jesus Christ, the office of bishop was essentially and inherently superior to that of presbyter. No one acquainted with the subject ever denied the superiority of the bishop over the presbyter who was not bishop. This is not the question. The question is, Was this distinction the result of superior grade or order in *the office* itself? or was it the result of an incidental or adventitious arrangement of the Church, voluntarily entered into?

For instance : in the army they generally have, at each garrison or station, an officer called *the officer of the day*. This officer may be a captain, or an officer of lower grade. While he holds this position, he has command of the garrison. He is, in respect of the duties pertaining to this matter, the superior of his equals, and even of his superiors in rank. But he is still a captain, or a lieutenant, or major, as the case may be.

This point is so common and simple that it can scarcely be misunderstood. It is exhibited around us every day in most of our Churches.

The question, however, does not relate to the apostolic succession : it only refers—let their language be construed as it may—to Church government. And it has already been explained that the apostolic succession is not incident to any particular form of government. To prove three orders in the ministry, either by a Divine or human law, only clears the way, but does not take the first step in proving the apostolic succession.

But moreover : what do these writers mean by the distinction they draw between bishop and elder, in speaking of

them separately? Let the reader be reminded of what he has had already explained to him, in the chapter on "*The practical distinction between bishop and presbyter*," and he will at once see that this is the natural manner in which these men would have spoken. He will see that this language no more proves three orders in the ministry by Divine command than a man's language would now, if he were to speak distinctively of the pastor of a Church and of other ministers belonging to the same Church who were not its pastor.

The "bishop" which these fathers speak of was the pastor; and the "presbyter" was the same kind of minister, with this only distinction, that he was not the pastor of a Church.

The "Churchman Armed," page 29, in a note by the "American editor," from the date and initials supposed to be Bishop Whittingham, of Baltimore, one of the staunchest high-Churchmen in America, says, under date of A. D. 200, that *bishop* meant "officiating presbyter."

That remark is true—just as true coming from Bishop Whittingham as from any other man. And its truth, at one blow, entirely displaces all the long chapters and volumes full of argument, put forth to prove that two ranks or grades or orders in the ministry must certainly exist where any peculiar duties are placed upon any one. The note at the bottom of the page, by the American editor, connected with the word "bishop," who is spoken of in the text as the minister of the Church, in explaining a historic matter, is this: "or officiating presbyter." Precisely so.

But let us look a single step farther into some of the writings of these same Fathers above quoted, and see how they explain themselves. We will see whether they mean by bishop, a Divinely instituted rank or order permanently inherent in the ministry, without which a Church or ministry cannot exist, or a mere officiating presbyter—one chosen from the presbytery to be the pastor.

Let Ignatius explain the sense in which he uses the term *bishop* as above quoted, and the relation which he regards as subsisting between the presbyter and the bishop.

But truth and justice require that first the reader be apprised of some things touching these so-called epistles of Ignatius, their genuineness, etc.

Probably the best translation we have of the Fathers of the first centuries, and that which is certainly in the highest repute among Episcopalians, is by Archbishop Wake. His introduction to the epistles of Ignatius commences with this paragraph :

“Before I enter upon that account which I am to give of the epistles of St. Ignatius, (the next that follow in the present collection,) it will be necessary for me to observe that there have been considerable differences in the editions of the epistles of this holy man, no less than in the judgment of our late critics concerning them. To pass by the first and most imperfect of them, the best that for a long time was extant contained not only a great number of epistles falsely accredited to this author, but even those that were genuine were so altered and corrupted that it was hard to find out the true Ignatius in them.”—Apostolic Fathers, p. 101.

The Christian Observer, an Episcopalian periodical published in London, says on this subject : “I do not mean to insinuate that the whole of these six epistles is a forgery : on the contrary, many parts of them afford strong internal evidence of their own genuineness ; but with respect to particular passages which affect the present dispute, (the polity of the primitive Church,) there is not a sentence which I would venture to allege. The language, at the earliest, is that of the fourth century.”—Stanton’s Prelacy Examined, p. 132.

Blondell says : “I am constrained to believe they are forgeries.” Calvin repudiates them as “filthy trash,” made long after Ignatius was dead. Salmasius says they are “coun-

terfeits," and Archbishop Usher "willingly subscribes" to that opinion. And still later researches pronounce them forgeries without doubt.

This is *the kind* of testimony we have to deal with. It is strange that high-Church controvertists in quoting Ignatius do not hint to their readers that there is any thing doubtful with regard to their authority. So far as I have seen, however, in this country, and for the most part in England, this is uniformly the case.

But still, let us see what Ignatius is said to have said, either by his forgers or copyists, as the case may chance to be.

Whatever else he does, he puts presbyters *as high* in office as he does bishops. As quoted above, he says "presbyters *preside* in the council of the apostles."

Again: "Also be subject to your presbyters, as to the apostles of Jesus Christ, our hope." Chap. i., v. 6, p. 132. In verse 8, same page, he speaks of "the presbyters as the sanhedrim of God, and college of the apostles."

In his epistle to the Smyrneans, chap. iii., v. 1, p. 156, he speaks of the duty of following "the presbytery as the apostles." I quote from Wake's translation.

Nothing is more conclusive than this, that Ignatius, or his forgers,—be it which way it may,—speak uniformly, in these epistles, of bishops and presbyters with the distinction and relation explained, in regard to them, in our former chapter on that subject. So that, so far as this question is concerned, we may readily admit every word of these epistles of Ignatius to be as genuine and true as Scripture. They do not contain *one word* that *intimates* that bishops rank in a higher order than presbyters, or that they differ from them in any other way than in the mere circumstance of their having the pastoral care. And it is only occasionally that he intimates this distinction. He unquestionably, in several instances as above quoted, speaks of "presbyters" as having the en-

tire ecclesiastical charge, and even *presiding* among the apostles.

Next in order, let us see how Irenæus explains himself: "When we refer them to that apostolic tradition which is preserved in the Churches through the succession of their presbyters, these men oppose the tradition, pretending that being more wise than not only the presbyters, but the apostles themselves, they have found the uncorrupted truth."

In another place he speaks of Polycarp as "bishop," but likewise speaks of him as "that blessed and apostolic presbyter." Again: "We ought to obey those presbyters in the Church who have succession, as we have shown, from the apostles: who, with the succession of the *episcopate*, received the certain gift of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father."—Coleman's *Primitive Church*, pp. 69, 70.

Here the "*episcopate*" is expressly ascribed to the "presbyters."

I have never been able to find any thing in the writings of the Fathers, or in any thing quoted or said to be quoted from them, which spoke of bishops and presbyters distinctly from each other, in any sense which placed the one above the other in office or rank. They uniformly speak of them in their relation to each other, when they distinguish between them at all, as is explained in our chapter on that subject.

Clement of Alexandria is another author referred to a few pages back. He lived in the third century. He was himself a presbyter, and not a bishop, that is, he was not a pastor when he wrote as follows: "We who have rule over the Churches are shepherds and pastors after the image of the Good Shepherd." Without multiplying quotations, we will present one which will show conclusively that he regarded presbyters as occupying a position, at least, as high in rank as bishops. In speaking of public worship, he says: "One part is performed by the superior ministers, another part by the inferior minis-

ters. The superior part is performed by the presbyters; the inferior or servile part by the deacons.”—Powell’s Apostolical Succession, p. 120. Nashville ed., 1848.

Jerome also was quoted from. It is most strange, indeed, that high-Churchmen quote from Jerome. Yet they do garble his language as above.

The following two quotations comprise all of any special importance that is said by Jerome on this subject. They were translated by Mr. Yerger from the best copies, from two different parts of his works, and were, perhaps, forced forward from that gentleman,—who, by the way, is undoubtedly one of the most learned and able writers in behalf of prelacy on either side of the Atlantic,—in a debate with the author. The two paragraphs entire, in Mr. Yerger’s own language, are here presented. (Debate, pages 84, 85.)

“A presbyter, therefore, is the same as a bishop; and before there were, by the devil’s instigation, parties in religion, and it was said among the people, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, (1 Cor. i. 12,) the Churches were governed by a common council of presbyters. Afterwards, indeed, when each thought those he baptized were his, not Christ’s, it was decreed through the whole world that one chosen from the presbyters should be put above the rest, to whom all the care of the Church should belong, and the seeds of schism be taken away. Should any one think that it is not the view of the Scriptures, but our own, that bishop and presbyter are the same, and that one is the name of age, the other of office, let him read the words of the apostle to the Philippians, saying, ‘Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: grace be unto you, and peace,’ (Phil. i. 1, 2,) and so forth. Philippi is a city of Macedonia, and certainly in one city there could not be more bishops, as they are now

called. But at that time they called those bishops whom they called presbyters; therefore, he speaks indifferently of bishops as of presbyters."

"But that afterwards one was chosen who should be above the rest, was done as a remedy against schism; lest each drawing the Church of Christ to himself should break it in pieces. For at Alexandria, from the Evangelist Mark to Heraclas and Dionysius, the bishops, the presbyters always chose one from among them, placed in a higher grade, named him bishop, like an army should make an emperor, or deacons should choose one of themselves, whom they know as most industrious, and call him arch-deacon. For what can a bishop do, ordination excepted, that a presbyter cannot?"

Jerome wrote in the fourth century. It is, perhaps, impossible for stronger testimony against prelacy, or the Divine superiority of bishops, to be adduced from any quarter, than is here presented from Jerome. He commences by saying, emphatically, "A presbyter, therefore, *is the same* as a bishop." The exception which he speaks of at the close, in regard to ordination, is of course, as he explains, a Church regulation.

Polycarp is also brought forward by high-Church writers. He was one of the primitive Fathers; died in A. D. 166. Bishop Otey, who from some strange un-American fancy styles himself "Bishop of Tennessee," in his "Three Discourses" on prelacy, at page 58, after presenting some *testimony* from Polycarp, says, "Here again is direct evidence against that parity which opposes itself to episcopacy."

Now, it so happens, that in the epistle of Polycarp—(there is but one epistle extant, of about nine pages, in Wake's translation)—the word bishop does not occur in any way. He speaks exclusively of presbyters and deacons. Not the slightest allusion is made to any other ministers or any other

office in the ministry. He does not in any way allude—and it is no doubt accidental that he does not—but he does not even allude to any distinction between the pastor and other presbyters in his whole letter. He speaks exclusively of presbyters and deacons. Yet it is “direct evidence!”

This is the *kind* of argument we have to contend with. Its imbecility is absolutely silly. And yet it is gravely put forth with apparent earnestness, and printed in books, and called “discourses,” “letters,” “essays,” and the like, oftentimes in ponderous volumes, as though it were really argument; and with the high-sounding authority of bishop, president, or doctor of divinity!

There is not in all the writings of the fathers, genuine or spurious, one word, ever pretended to be quoted or garbled from any thing ever attributed to them, which hints at the idea that, in their days, either by Divine or human law, the office of bishop was above that of presbyter, or different from it, except, as before explained, that the presbyter who had charge of the Church or congregation as pastor was called bishop.

And as to the doctrine of “apostolic succession,” which they are called upon to sustain by “direct evidence,” and whose writings are put forth as “the most clear and invincible testimony” in favor of, there is not in their writings, there was never pretended to be quoted from them, a sentence, or part of a sentence, which gives the slightest hint that they ever heard of such a doctrine! There is absolutely no more or nearer an allusion, in the writings of the Fathers, to the notion of a successive chain of ordinations in bishops, as a superior order of ministers to elders or presbyters, in which, or in virtue of which ordinations, is contained the vitality of the Church and the ministry, than is to be found in the last novel. Such a question is in no way, nearly or remotely,

alluded to or hinted at. And yet, in discussing this question, we are compelled to travel through and among the Fathers, because our opponents do. We might with the same legal or logical propriety be led through treatises upon navigation or agriculture, or be made to weigh and investigate the pages of the spelling-book !

CHAPTER VI.

DIFFICULTY WITH REGARD TO ST. PAUL.

THE doctrine of apostolic succession is based on this wise :— The only authority to preach and minister the Gospel resided in the first place in Jesus Christ. After his death and resurrection, and a very short time before his ascension, he gave specific authority to his eleven apostles to preach, as recorded at the close of the Gospel by St. Matthew. Thus the only authority *in men* to preach resided in these eleven men personally. They had authority to preach, and to communicate the authority to others, and they to others, and so on, by ordination personally performed from man to man; and outside of this chain of successive ordinations there is no authority to preach.

This is the doctrine of succession. He who presumes to preach outside of this chain of ordinations is a schismatic and a wrong-doer.

Now, there is a twofold difficulty with regard to St. Paul. He was not one of these twelve men. He was a wicked sinner at the time, and for several years afterward. But immediately on his being converted, without waiting for ordination, or for apostles, or for authority, he went forthwith to preaching. He preached several years, certainly, without the consent and without the knowledge of the apostles; for, according to the best and most probable history of his ministry, it was about four or five years after he commenced preaching

that he went to Jerusalem, and the disciples would not recognize him as a minister, or even as a disciple. See Acts ix. 26, 27. This was the first the apostles knew of him.

Now, here was a schismatic and wrong-doer, as much as it is possible for any man to be a schismatic and wrong-doer, according to this rule. It is no argument at all to say that St. Paul was an apostle, and thus slur the matter over. The only authority on earth to preach the gospel resided in the eleven apostles as first communicated to them; and supposing that they ordained Matthias, then there were twelve. This is the *root* of all authority to preach. Paul certainly received no authority from them. But it may be said that Paul received his authority to preach directly from Christ, in virtue of his being an apostle. Then the foundation of the whole scheme is destroyed, because then the commission recited at the close of Matthew is not the *only* authority given by Christ to preach the gospel. And if Christ gave authority to one person outside of the eleven, who can say how many or who else received authority in the same way? Barnabas was called an apostle in the New Testament. How did he receive his authority? And there were still other persons called apostles. How did they receive authority? Would succession be good if traced back to a dozen or twenty other persons than the eleven? The doctrine says it must be traced to the eleven; and it also says it is good if traced to Paul, and consequently to several other persons outside of the eleven. In the very outset, therefore, it makes war upon its own foundation principles.

But again: Paul was either *right* or *wrong* in preaching the gospel before he first met the apostles at Jerusalem. It is certain he had received no authority from them. If he had received authority from Christ, then the apostles were wrong in not recognizing him as a preacher. Paul was utterly unable to convince the apostles that he was a disciple. It

required the interference and assurances of Barnabas to induce them to recognize him even as a disciple, or in any way.

So, according to the doctrine of prelacy, Paul probably did as much harm in preaching without authority after his conversion as he did by persecution before. Nor does he appear to have improved much afterward.

Some years after this he was ordained at Antioch by "prophets and teachers," where it appears there was not an apostle present. Now, if no ministry is valid other than that which has its *root* in the commission which Christ gave to the eleven apostles as above, then Paul never did have authority to preach, for he was neither one of these eleven, nor was he ordained by one of them.

But this is not the greatest difficulty. The apostolic succession is oftentimes attempted, or said to be attempted, to be traced to *him*, as an original ordainer. But what is gained by tracing ordinations to him? The ordaining unction was not in him; for he was not one of those on whom it was originally conferred, nor was he in the stream descending from them.

Our opponents must be consistent, and stand by their own principles after fixing them somewhere. If St. Paul had original apostolic authority to ordain, then he became possessed of it in some other way than by the commission given in the last of Matthew. And then that *other way*, whatever it be, is also a valid source of the ordaining authority. Or, if the commission in Matthew be the original and only commission given to mankind—as is contended by high-Churchmen—then St. Paul is out of it; and had not only not authority to ordain others, but he had not even authority to preach himself. How did he get it? No man can tell any possible way, without removing the grand corner-stone of prelacy.

To say that Paul became possessed of authority to preach and to ordain in virtue of his being an apostle, does not get

rid of the difficulty ; for then the *being an apostle* constitutes the virtue and essence of investiture, and not the “commission” in Matthew, so constantly and elaborately harped upon. It was the *one*, or the *other*—will any high-Churchman say which? Suppose it was the commission in Matthew. Then Paul is entirely out ; for it was never pretended, cannot be pretended, that Paul ever, by descent, ordination, or otherwise, had any thing to do with *that commission*, beyond what is common to all ministers. And suppose the original authority to ordain inheres in virtue of the being an apostle. Then where, or *to whom*, do we trace the commission or the succession? To the eleven? or to Judas? or to the twelve, including Matthias? or to the thirteen, including Paul? or to the fourteen, including Barnabas? or to *whom*? What *rule* is laid down for us to go by?

These are questions that no man can answer, without totally uprooting the doctrine of apostolic succession, either in one way or another.

To say that Paul preached *in virtue of his being an apostle*, displaces the commission in Matthew as the only apostolic commission. And, moreover, it puts Paul in a very ridiculous attitude before the apostles at Jerusalem, where he was entirely unable to make his fellow-apostles believe he had any such commission. They repudiated him totally until his friend Barnabas interceded for him, and pleaded in his behalf.

CHAPTER VII.

A WICKED BISHOP CAN NEITHER BE RETAINED NOR
EXCOMMUNICATED.

ANOTHER difficulty of prelaey is, that it places the Church in a position where it can neither excommunicate a bishop, nor fail to excommunicate him, in circumstances that may, and sometimes do, occur.

A bishop is invested personally with the Divine unction, or ordaining power. It is a *Divine* investment coming to the man, through an official channel, from Christ. It is, however, just as Divine and just as personal as if it had been communicated by Christ, in person, directly. Now, it is simply absurd to say that human persons can abrogate or disannul a Divine investiture. If the episcopal function inheres in the man personally by Divine law, then it remains with him until the Divine hand takes it away by death or otherwise.

Could human persons have divested Paul or Peter of his authority to preach? Then the question is settled; for all the successors stand in the same attitude, so far as the investment is concerned. It is a *Divine* investment.

This difficulty has been most signally illustrated recently by the Protestant Episcopal Church. A bishop was proved to be guilty of gross and wicked licentiousness. But what could the Church do? He was a bishop by *Divine* invest-

ment. His office could not be taken away from him, because men could not wield the Divine arm.

And so he continues to be a bishop. He is still a vicerent of Christ, a chief minister of the gospel, a man of God. He is also a servant of sin, a wicked man, an enemy of Christ, under the curse of his wrath, a child of the devil.

All this is true—must be true, or prelacy must give way. I only speak of matters of record.

Another bishop became a heretic, denied the faith, renounced Christianity, and ran after Romanism, the mother of harlots. He is now no longer a Christian; and if not a Christian, he cannot be a *Christian* bishop; so he must be, and consequently is, excommunicated.

This act of excommunication violates the law of God, however; for that law declares, as distinctively as though it were written on his forehead, that that man, identically and personally, is Divinely invested with the functions of a bishop. It is as *plain*, though perhaps not as *wicked*, a violation of God's law, to deprive him of his Divinely invested bishopric, as to deprive him of any other Divine investment, his limbs or his life. *The investment was his by Divine law.*

And in the other case, the omission to excommunicate the convicted sinner-bishop was a plain violation of the Divine law; for that law says all Christians shall withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly—that is, excommunicate him. “But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican.” “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

Hence, it is palpable and conclusive that in any such like cases as the above, we are obliged to violate the plain mandates of God, go which way we may, or though we stand still.

High-Churchmen have never been able to settle among

themselves the question whether the Church has or has not the power, under any circumstances, to excommunicate a bishop. Excommunication, for any cause whatever, comes in direct conflict with the doctrine of a Divine infallible investiture of a Divine function which prelacy supposes to inhere in a bishop.

The Bible plainly teaches that there are false Christians, false ministers, false prophets, false apostles; and it plainly directs, that from all such the Church and all Christians shall withdraw themselves. And yet, "once a bishop always a bishop," is a doctrine inseparable from that of the apostolic succession.

And, moreover, the idea is not only strange, but abhorrent to plain, simple Bible Christians, that a wicked man, because some other man, perhaps himself as wicked, performed a certain ceremony upon his head, using certain words and manipulations, is constituted an infallible Divine channel for the transmission of God's grace and sacramental virtue to a sinner, that thereby he may become a Christian saved by Christ. The naked idea, apart from the grave and apparently sage-like and ministerial drapery thrown around it, is absolutely ridiculous. It violates the Holy Scriptures in a hundred places.

CHAPTER VIII.

ORIGIN OF EPISCOPACY.

It has been shown that, so far as the world is informed, in the days of the apostles there was nothing that could be called episcopacy in the government of the Churches, beyond the general superintendence of the apostles. It has also been seen that these functions of control were *necessary* in the first planting of Christianity, and that they were bestowed personally upon the apostles, and ceased with their lives ; for they were personally vested in those apostles, and were in their nature not negotiable or transferable.

Then how did episcopacy come about? In the most natural and simple way conceivable.

Christianity commenced in the cities and large towns. By degrees it worked its way into the country and small towns, principally by the city Churches branching off and sending ministers into those places to superintend such Churches. Thus Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth, became as many centres of operation. They were the chief points of effort and influence for the extension of Church operations in their respective neighborhoods round about.

The pastors, and converts, and ministers, of these and other Churches at important points, doubtless followed the example of the apostles, prompted by a zeal for religion, planted Churches wherever they could, and appointed suitable persons to preach

and superintend their affairs. And so there became, naturally, a parent Church, and subordinate branches thereof, more or less depending upon it for support, advice, and assistance. The country and village Churches owed a filial relation to the city Church from which they sprang. The distresses and persecutions to which these Churches were subject drew these lines of compact closer and closer. The parent Church was deservedly the object of respect. It was founded probably by one of the apostles, and was still in the hands of one of his successors, but one or two removes from him. This relation between one central and several surrounding Churches would naturally lead to a delegated or other sort of supervisory care by the parent Church over the others. And this is episcopacy.

That in process of years it became very much corrupted—that what was at first a matter of Christian courtesy and reciprocal benefit, became a matter of lordly right and high-toned episcopal rule—is abundantly tested by the history of the Church in those times. It finally led on to a grand centralized pontifical sway, as unlike primitive Christianity in form as it was and is injurious to its spirit and temper.

Now there is nothing, absolutely nothing, so far as I have been able to see, in any thing which claims to be Church history, which contradicts or renders at all improbable this view of the origin of episcopacy. Some respectable writers, where early training and later prepossessions have led them towards high episcopal notions, have in some few instances expressed a doubt of this hypothesis; but not one has written any historic fact which is irreconcilable therewith.

And, on the other hand, the highest and best historic authorities all take this view of it.

For a long time there was in the Church much of real episcopacy, before it acquired a distinctive name or became a distinctive and settled branch of ministerial labor. The pas-

tor was the bishop. This is parochial episcopacy, and is as old as the Church is. And when a central or parent Church would send a minister to look over, advise, and assist neighboring Churches, it was still called episcopacy. In process of years this supervisory or superintending episcopacy became very general. And though it was at first very beneficial, in time, as the Church became corrupt, it produced great spiritual disasters.

This view of episcopacy *must* be correct, from the following consideration :

“A compendious ecclesiastical history, from the earliest period to the present time, by the Rev. William Palmer, M. A., of Worcester College, Oxford, (England,) with a preface and notes by an American editor,” supposed to be Bishop Whittingham, is a small history, compiled with the express view of sustaining the high-Church pretensions. It is a “Church book” of so rare qualities that it is bound usually with Hobart’s Apology, and called “*The Churchman Armed.*”

From this book we learn a few historic facts, which, though perhaps not entirely accurate, are as nearly so as the defective early records will allow us to look for. These facts utterly, at a blow, destroy the notion of prelacy in early times, and establish the opposing hypothesis. I prefer quoting from standard high-Church authority when it can conveniently be done, though the same facts could be brought from other quarters.

At page 35 we learn that the council of Nice was the first ecumenical council; that it assembled in A. D. 325, and that *three hundred and eighteen* bishops attended it.

At page 38 we learn that the emperor called a council of “the bishops of the west to the number of *four hundred*,” in the year A. D. 359. The western Church at that time embraced less than half of the entire Church.

On page 44 we learn that a general council was held in the year 451, at which *six hundred and thirty* bishops attended. To recapitulate :

In 325 there were three hundred and eighteen bishops present. In the year 359 the western Church alone assembled four hundred bishops ; and in 451 we have six hundred and thirty bishops present at one place.

Now, considering that at that time the conveniences of travelling were so deficient that it had mostly to be done on foot, and that the Church was spread over considerable portions of country, many of the bishops having to travel a thousand miles and more, it could hardly be supposed that over half the entire number of bishops could be got together at once. We are then to believe, that in the year 325 there were in the Christian Church about six hundred bishops. In 359 the western Church alone must have contained seven or eight hundred, and in 451 the whole Church must have contained eleven or twelve hundred bishops !

This, if it were intended for romance, understanding *bishops* in the prelatical sense, would be considered frantic wildness ; regarding it as sober truth, it falls so far below the standard of reasonable probability, as to appear to a reasonable man ridiculous.

What was the extent of the Church in the middle of the fifth century, or in the early or middle part of the fourth ? When had the Church, in any age, a thousand bishops ? When had it the half, the quarter of that number ? How many Christian bishops are there now on earth, with all the Church's increase since the years 300 or 400 ?

In the Methodist Church in the United States there are over a hundred thousand members to a bishop. According to this ratio, in the fifth century there were in the Church over a hundred millions of Episcopalians. The ratio of members to a bishop in the Protestant Episcopal Church in this

country is about one to every four thousand three hundred. According to this ratio, there must have been, most probably, as early as the fifth century, in Episcopal Churches from four to five millions of members. Either supposition is far too wild and visionary for a dream.

And yet the correctness of the historic statement can be accounted for in the simplest and easiest way imaginable. Let the term "bishop" be understood as Jerome says it was understood in those days—pastors of Churches—and the matter is perfectly plain. The following remark from that celebrated and learned divine is in addition to what has been already quoted from him :

"Our intention in these remarks is to show that among the ancients, presbyters and bishops were the very same ; but by little and little, that the plants of dissension might be plucked up, the whole concern was devolved upon an individual."

That is, the entire charge of the Church devolved on the pastor. Again, immediately following :

"As the presbyters, therefore, know that they are subject, by the custom of the Church, to him who is set over them, so let the bishops know that they are greater than presbyters more by custom than by any appointment of Christ."—Stevens's Church Polity, p. 56.

St. Augustin in the same age speaks of bishops in the same way ; and says expressly that his superiority over the presbyter was not a Divine, but a mere Church regulation. (See Jewell's Defence, p. 122.)

But this is by no means the greatest difficulty to be surmounted on this particular point.

The learned Du Pin gives a catalogue of six hundred and ninety bishops in the ancient Church in Africa.

Schoene says that in the time of Augustin there were *nine hundred* bishops in Africa. And Augustin himself says that in his day there were in Africa *nine hundred and twenty*

bishops. (Coleman's Primitive Church, p. 208.) And also that "in a very *small district* there were about five hundred bishops."—Brown's Letters to Dr. Pusey, p. 56.

Now, if these were diocesan bishops, according to the apostolic succession doctrine, and not mere pastors, then, according to the proportion of Christians in Africa to those in all Christendom, and the probable ratio of the number of members of Churches to a bishop, there must have been some two or three hundred *millions* of Episcopalians then in the entire Church. These statements are quoted by Coleman from the New York Evangelist of 1843, p. 182.

How is it possible that *men* can claim that in the sixth century there were about two or three thousand diocesan bishops in the Church! Then, with the known increase since, there should be at the present time a hundred-fold more bishops than there are, and a greater number of members of Episcopal churches than there are human beings on the face of the earth twice told. The notion carries us into some other regions far beyond the ridiculous.

CHAPTER IX.

ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

THE doctrine of prelacy commenced in the Church of England about the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Church of England was organized upon improper principles, and its early ministers had peculiar and powerful difficulties to contend with. Nor have these disadvantages been overcome to the present day.

In the forepart of the reign of Henry VIII., and previously, the Church of England had not been heard of. A part of the Roman Catholic Church was *in* England, and had been for nearly a thousand years. But in England the Romish Church was in no respect dissimilar to the same thing in any other countries. Henry was a proud, ambitious, bad man. At first he resisted the principles of Luther and the other Reformers most vehemently, and wrote a small book against the principles of the Reformation and in favor of the Papacy, as a reward for which Pope Leo X. conferred upon him the honorary title of "Defender of the Faith."

But in process of a few years Henry became dissatisfied with his wife, who was several years older than himself, and became enamored of the beautiful and accomplished Anne Boleyn. He applied to his friend the Pope for a divorce. But the relation between Catharine, his wife, and Charles V., Emperor of Germany, made it impolitic for the Pope to

grant the request, and delayed the matter till Henry became impatient of delay; and finally, being determined to effect his purpose in some way, Cranmer suggested, or rather advised, that the King should be divorced without the decree of the Pope.

The plan was instantly seized upon, and the divorce was effected. But when the thing came to be looked into, the desperate measures of Henry had not only divorced him from his wife, but had also, as a consequence, divorced the English Church from the Church of Rome.

The condition and progress of the Reformation at this particular moment, though so hated and opposed by Henry, made it a pretext quite apropos. Many of the English Christians were warmly in favor of the Reformation, and Henry found it exceedingly convenient to make a virtue of necessity, and declare for the Reformation. He did so; and at the same time declared himself the head of the Church.

Mosheim, the great ecclesiastical historian, says: "It is true that from the time of Henry VIII. the kings of England consider themselves as supreme heads of the Church; and that in relation to its spiritual as well as its temporal concerns; and it is plain enough that on the strength of this important title, both Henry VIII. and his son Edward assumed an extensive authority and jurisdiction in the Church, and looked upon this spiritual power as equal to that which had been unworthily enjoyed by the Roman pontiff."—*Ecclesiastical History*, vol. iii., p. 304.

This is the first instance, in the history of the Church, of a layman, without any pretence to ministerial orders, exercising the highest functions of episcopacy. The anomaly, strange and unchristian as it is, remains in the Church of England to this day.

This strange and unnatural state of things has given rise to many difficulties which have not been entirely confined to

the English Church. The supreme bishop was a layman. Elizabeth, in whose reign the English Church was finally established as a Protestant Church, relaxed her episcopal functions—that is, the exercise of them—but the clergy and Church were in difficulty. They were pious men, and desired to maintain the discipline and polity of the Church in a way which would in some sort conform to the past and early history thereof, and at the same time be good and loyal subjects of the crown. They are in these difficulties still.

“The truth of the matter is plainly this, that the ecclesiastical polity in England has never acquired a stable and consistent form, nor been reduced to clear and certain principles. It has rather been carried on and administered by ancient customs and precedent, than defined and fixed by any regular system of laws and institutions.”—Mosheim, vol. iii., p. 305.

One of the means used by the Pope and his minions to restrain the reformers, was the declaration that the *orders* of their ministry were defective, because they had not descended in an unbroken chain from *the Church*, as they called their hierarchy. This question of the regular descent of orders was for a long time unnoticed by the English divines entirely. They were satisfied with their true faith and piety, and the presence and influence of the Holy Ghost among them, and left the legendary question of the traditions of Christianity to Papists.

But after the Reformation became established in England, and they had leisure for reflection, they were annoyed by the lay-episcopacy of their Church government. Mosheim says :

“It was not an easy matter to determine in what hands the power of deciding affairs of a religious nature was to be lodged : it was no less difficult to fix the form of ecclesiastical government in which this power was to be administered. Many vehement disputes were kindled on this subject, which neither the lapse of time, nor the efforts of human wisdom,

have been able to bring to an amicable issue.”—*Ecclesiastical History*, vol. iii., p. 305.

The question of the regular succession, by Divine right, of the crown, was, of course, a prominent question in England; and the intimate relation between, nay, the oneness of the crown and the episcopacy, furnished the very easiest means imaginable for a transfer of the notion of succession in its application to the latter. Meanwhile, the Popish writers were constantly goading the reformers with their lack of ministerial authority, arising from their want of episcopal ordinations in an unbroken line. High episcopal rule was, of course, a prominent notion of Popery. The English clergy who were inclined to these lofty notions of ecclesiastical prerogative, could not, of course, acknowledge the necessity of successive ordinations, unless they could in some plausible degree establish the fact in their Church.

This feeling had privately gained some considerable elevation when in 1588 Bishop Bancroft pretty clearly intimated it in public. The notion met decided disfavor except with a few. And in the hands of Bancroft, the notion can, perhaps, not more than be said to have been intimated.

William Laud, who afterwards became archbishop, entered the ministry about twenty years after the sermon of Bancroft, above alluded to, was preached. Laud was a man of indomitable energy and perseverance, a great bigot, very superstitious, and a great tyrant. At a very early period in his ministry, he boldly brought forward, in a sermon in the university of Oxford, the doctrine that a succession of episcopal orders was as necessary in the Church as the regular descent of the crown was in the civil power.

This bold avowal of the new doctrine gave great offence; so much so that the university passed a formal censure and repudiation of it. But Laud was not a man to be put down so easily. He gained favor with James, the reigning sove-

reign, attained to the see of Canterbury, and planted in the English Church, principles of prerogative and priestly power, which in all likelihood will not be eradicated until they, with those who maintain them, shall find a down-hill passway into full Popery.

When the Roman Catholic bigot and despot, King James II., abdicated the throne and fled from his country in 1688, the great *non-juror* question arose, which rested itself mainly on the unpopular principles of Laud.

Sancroft, the archbishop of Canterbury, and seven other bishops, thought they could not adhere to the new king, William III., and, for refusing to swear allegiance, were deprived of their offices and their sees.

“The deposed bishops and clergy,” says Mosheim, “formed a new episcopal Church, which differed in certain points of doctrine and certain circumstances of public worship from the established Church of England. This new religious community were denominated Nonjurors, on account of their refusing to take the oath of allegiance, and were also called the high Church, on account of the high notions they entertained of the dignity and power of the Church, and the extent they gave to its prerogatives and jurisdiction. Those, on the other hand, who disapproved of this course, who distinguished themselves by their charity and moderation towards dissenters, and were less ardent in extending the limits of ecclesiastical authority, were denominated low Churchmen.”—*Ecclesiastical History*, vol. iv., pp. 111, 112.

Here we have the origin of “HIGH CHURCH.” It was and still is a secession from the Church of England on account of high notions of ecclesiastical power. Imbibing and following the doctrine of succession, the seceders followed their dethroned monarch; and acting upon the same principles in the Church, they held to a regular descent of authority, denied the validity of orders not strictly episcopal, and claimed the

same prerogatives in the one case that they acknowledged in the other.

This schism in the Church remains to this day.

The principles embraced in this controversy were regarded as highly important, and called forth the sentiments of the first men in the Church.

Our limits will only allow of a bare notice of the opinions of some of her first men on the subject. In the thirteenth year of Elizabeth the parliament passed a law, "by which the ordinations of the foreign Reformed Churches were declared valid, and those that had no other orders were made of the same capacity with others who enjoy any place in the ministry within England, merely on their subscribing the articles."—Brown's Letters to Dr. Pusey, page 31.

Lord Bacon says to King James: "I for my part do confess that in revolving the Scriptures, I could never find but that God had left the like liberty to the Church government as he had done to the civil government, to be varied according to time, and place, and accidents. The substance of doctrine is immutable; and so are the general rules of government; but for rites and ceremonies, and for the particular hierarchies, policies, and disciplines of Churches, they may be left at large."—Brown's Letters, page 36.

Bishop Stillingfleet, in his *Irenicum*, chapter 8, part 2, gives us the most conclusive evidence that human testimony is capable of furnishing, that the great body of the Church, at and long after its formation, was presbyterial in its views of Church government; that is, that it was esteemed that ordination by a bishop, considered as superior to presbyters, was not necessary to the being of the Church, the proper administration of the ordinances, or the ordaining of other ministers. And he gives the names of many of the most learned and prominent of the clergy who maintained this view. Among the names he mentions are the following: Archbishops Cranmer

and Whitgift, Bishop Bridges, Dr. Low, Hooker, King James, Sutcliff, Hales, Chillingworth, Chemnitius, Zanchy, Peter Molin, Fugevil, Blondell, Bochartus, Amyraldus, Grotius, Lord Bacon, The Augustin Confession, Melancthon, Articuli Smalcaldici, Prince of Anhalt, Hyperius, Hemnigues, Calvin, Beza, Bishop Jewell, Fulke, Field, Downham, Bancroft, Manton, Andrews, Saravia, Francis Mason, etc.

In fact, this must have been the doctrine of the Reformers, because it is an essential principle of the Reformation itself, as we will see in a future chapter.

Bishop Burnet expressly holds that ordination at all is not absolutely necessary to the administration of the sacraments, the preaching of the word, the proper government of the Church, or the *ordaining* of ministers, in such places and under such circumstances as will not admit of regular ordination. He holds that in such cases *lay ordination* is justifiable and proper.

Bishop Tillotson, "that great prelate," as Bishop Burnet calls him, carefully examined and affirmed this doctrine; as did also Bishop Stillingfleet. The doctrine was also affirmed by the Bishops of Duresme, St. David's, and Westminster, and by Drs. Tresham, Cox, Leighton, Crawford, Symmons, Redmayn, and Robertson. This doctrine was affirmed, too, not merely hypothetically, but in reference to cases then before the Church. (See Burnet's Collection of Records, part I., book iii., No. 21.)

It was also declared by both houses of parliament in 1543, that priests and bishops are, by God's law, one and the same; and that the powers of *ordination* and excommunication belong equally to both.

Archbishop Usher replied to Charles I., in answer to the royal inquiry, that presbyters did ordain.

Bishop Stillingfleet says: It is acknowledged by the stoutest champions of episcopacy, before those late unhappy divi-

sions, that ordinations performed by presbyters, in case of necessity, are valid.

Bishop Forbes says: "Presbyters have by Divine right the power of ordaining as well as of preaching and baptizing."

Lord High Chancellor King says: "As for ordinations, I find clearer proofs of presbyters ordaining than of their administering the Lord's Supper."

These things show conclusively that the English Church, since the Reformation, did not uniformly *pretend to endeavor* to confine ordinations to bishops, much less to preserve a succession of ordinations in bishops as the vitality of the Church.

CHAPTER X.

HOW CAN THE SUCCESSION PASS THROUGH WICKED
HANDS?

It is notoriously known and acknowledged on all hands that the succession of ordinations, if it has come down in an uninterrupted chain from the apostles to our day, must have passed through the hands of many of as wicked men as ever lived. During that dismal period usually denominated by historians the "Dark Ages," the Church presented a picture of wickedness, crime, infamy, and moral putridity and corruption, as dark as that which is to be found on any page of the world's history. Sees of the highest dignity were oftentimes openly transferred by treachery, fraud, violence, bloodshed, simony, concubinage, and rapine. And the question arises, How can the sacramental virtue pass through the hands of these men and boys—for they were sometimes boys of ten and five years old—how can the essential vitality of the Church and the ministry pass pure and good through these hands?

The only answer to this question I have ever seen is that which is copied and handed round between Percival, Hook, Chapman, and others, and is found in all the high-Church writings which touch upon the point. It is this: the wickedness of the *person* does not prevent or obstruct the discharge of *official* duty by him.

Bishop Hobart says, *Churchman Armed*, page 142 :

“The acts of a wicked magistrate, the decisions of a corrupt judge, are valid, *because of his commission*. The acts of our unholy ministers of the Church are valid for the same reason, *because of their commission*.”

But let us see how far these cases are parallel, and then we will see how far the illustration holds good. Immoralities, to a certain extent, in a judge, will not, and to an extent beyond that they will, work as a nullity of his official acts. Immorality in a judge or magistrate which goes to the extent of a disqualification for office, does, or ought to, nullify his official acts.

But the cases are by no means parallel, for another reason. In what sense is the term “valid” used? It means, it is presumed, of *legal binding force*. But binding upon whom? They may be binding as to the Church, and the bishop, and the person ordained. But that is not the question. The question is, *Is the act binding upon Christ?* Jesus Christ binds himself to confer blessings in pursuance of his promises. Now, do his promises say that the ministrations of a wicked man will be recognized by him, and that in and through them he will confer his blessings? Or do his promises say any thing about the ministry of wicked men?

Now, the expressions of Christ are abundant in the Scriptures, that he *will not*, under any circumstances, be bound by the acts of wicked men as his ministers: that he will not own their acts, or have any thing whatever to do with either the men or their acts, except to issue his unceasing curses and displeasure upon them.

A wicked bishop, believed to be a holy man by the Church, may act as the officer of the Church in performing ordination, and it is binding upon the man and the Church, for the reason that they entered into the arrangement in good faith. The ordination being a matter between the Church and the minis-

ter—as is explained in our chapter on ordination—the virtue of ordination not consisting in any vitality or sacramental virtue personal in the bishop, and which is conferred by the bishop personally upon the minister in the act of ordination, it becomes a valid ordination, though the bishop does not work the validity into the matter. The ordination is valid, if valid at all, not because of any thing personally inherent in the bishop, as the vicar of Christ, which produced the validity, but because of the good faith in which the Church and the minister to be ordained entered into the matter. The ordained minister is the minister of Christ, not of the bishop.

Let us see if an ordination is absolutely valid, “*because of the commission*” of the bishop. Suppose a man goes to a validly-ordained bishop and offers him a thousand dollars for ordination, and he performs the ceremony. Is the man a “valid” bishop? Or, suppose another goes with a revolver, and without much ceremony demands the performance of the ceremony of ordination, and procures it. Is he a “bishop?”

The “commission” was certainly not wanting. But what Christian man will say that in either case there is an ordination recognized by Jesus Christ?

Gentlemen must be held to their own arguments. The doctrine of the validity of orders depending entirely upon the “commission” of the bishop—meaning a commission from Christ—supposes the absurdity which has been hereinbefore refuted: that a vital current of *something*, coming from Christ, descends through the persons of bishops, and is communicable by the pronunciation of certain words and the performance of certain manipulations upon another person.

But how can this Divine vitality pass through wicked hands? If it does, and Christ has any thing to do with it, it is expressly in opposition to the Scriptures in a hundred places. The third chapter of 1 Timothy tells us what a bishop *must be*—that is, one of Christ’s bishops. According

to this plan of conferring "valid" orders by virtue of personal "commission," we may have a Christian Church and ministry without a Christian in it!

Suppose a kennel of infidels were in some way to procure ordination for one of their number to the presbyterate or to the bishopric. The clan then immediately becomes a Christian Church. And so Christianity and infidelity are identical.

It is not within the realms of logic to evade the force of this argument.

Again, it is attempted to be held that a valid ministry may exist in the persons of wicked men from the case of Judas, whom they say was both an apostle and a devil under the eye of the Saviour. So a word or two must be said about Judas and *his* successors.

The case of Judas is totally misapprehended. If it could be shown that Judas acted as a minister of Jesus Christ *while* he was a traitor, and that the Saviour recognized his acts of ministry *after* he betrayed his Lord, the case would be different. But what are the facts? Was Judas a bishop? Was he a minister of the gospel? Was he ever authorized to preach the gospel, or to ordain others to do so? Why, the ministry of the gospel was not authorized *to be* preached in the lifetime of Judas. Judas Iscariot was dead before the apostolic commission was given. Judas, in all probability, never heard of a gospel or its ministry. He did not live in the gospel dispensation. Christ had neither shed his blood for sinners, nor had he risen from the dead until after the death of Judas. Whatever else may be said of this celebrated sinner, this much must be said, that he lived and died *before the gospel ministry began*.

This argument cannot be answered by saying that the Saviour sent the twelve apostles forth to preach, in his lifetime, with Judas among them. This is very true. But what the character of that preaching was, we do not certainly know.

It was probably a forewarning of the forthcoming of the gospel. The gospel, in its full development, the atonement, the crucified and risen Saviour, the salvation by Jesus Christ based upon his death and resurrection, could not, in the nature of the case, be preached until after the death of Christ. The religious preaching before this looked forward to these events. The twelve apostles, however, did not fully preach these things, even prospectively, for they did not clearly understand them. They were hard to convince of his resurrection, even after it took place. The Christian dispensation commenced, not at the birth but at the death of Jesus Christ. His death and resurrection form the corner-stone of Christianity.

And again. Suppose for a single moment that Judas was a Christian apostle in the sense of a bishop. Then his "commission" authorized him to ordain, and a chain of ordinations descending from him would be equally valid with that coming from John or Peter. Will that do? Is the Christianity of Judas "valid" Christianity? Those who claim him as a valid ordainer of Christian bishops cannot refuse to consider themselves, and be considered, as *his successors*!

Will this do? It is the argument with which prelati- cal writers furnish us.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ATTEMPT TO AVOID ROME.

THE doctrine has lately been set on foot that the apostolic succession can be so traced as to avoid the Romish Church entirely, and thus get rid of the abominable corruptions and wickedness that are well known to lie all along the history of the papal hierarchy. This has been deemed to be important by the advocates of succession, and the best talent of the party has been engaged in its execution.

They attempt to show that a Church was planted at a very early day in Lyons, in ancient Gaul, now France. Then they have some historic fables that at a very early day it was introduced among the savages of Britain; that it was preserved in that island, in the see of Canterbury, until it was transferred to the United States a few years ago.

I see no sort of necessity for making any argument with high-Churchmen on this point; and will, therefore, so far as this argument is concerned, grant all that is claimed. It is, then, granted that all these dreams and fables are history. We will, if any high-Churchman chooses, admit the tale of romance respecting St. Paul's visit to England; that he planted the gospel, and ordained a "bishop" there. We admit any thing on this point that is asked for. And now, supposing all these dreams of romance and visions of fancy to be good history, we have two observations to make.

First. There was a reformation of the Church in the

sixteenth century, by which Protestants broke off from the Romish communion, and set up a Christian Church. Previous to the Reformation, the whole of Christianity was under the dominion of the Church of Rome, except, perhaps, a handful of persecuted refugee Christians, here and there, in the mountains and forests of France, Germany, and Switzerland. But all of known, public, organized Christianity in the world was for a whole thousand years under the Romish dominion, except the oriental Churches, from which their succession could not have been derived.

These facts, it is presumed, are admitted by every one who ever heard of the Church's history. Then a part of the Romish Church was in Africa, part in Germany, part in Switzerland, in France, in England, Scotland, etc., etc. What matters it how early the Church was planted in England, or by whom? It is well known that since the visit of Augustin to that country, in A. D. 596, up to the declaration of the independence of the Church by Henry VIII., in 1531, a period of 935 years, the only organized Church in the island of Great Britain was a regular Roman Catholic Church. A part of the Church of Rome was in France, part of it in Germany, part in England, part in Italy, etc., etc. There was a Church in England, every one admits, since A. D. 596; but was it not a Romish Church? It is not, surely it is not—as the above high-Church argument seems to suppose—necessary for a Church of Rome to be *in the city of Rome*. D'Aubigne says, vol. v., Hist. Ref., p. 189, "There was more Romish faith in London than in the Vatican." And as to the *corruptions* of Rome, it is not known that they were ever circumscribed by any geographical boundaries, or by any other kind of boundaries.

It is not known, therefore, what is sought to be gained by proving an early plantation of a Christian Church in Britain, and its continuance there. How is it attempted to

be made out that these circumstances remove the English Church from the blackness and darkness of Romish corruption?

But, secondly. The *reason* for the attempt to separate English and American ordinations from those of the Romish Church is not understood. *For what purpose* is it attempted to set up a line of ordinations separate and apart from and independent of Rome? We only want high-Churchmen to be consistent with themselves. Are Romish ordinations invalid? What invalidates them? The high-Church doctrine is, that ordinations are valid "because of the commission" of the ordaining bishop, irrespective of any morality or immorality, piety or impiety, in the bishop personally. Then what invalidates Romish ordinations? And if they are not invalid, then are they not as good as validity can make them? And then *why* this anxious effort to make history out of fables in order to get clear of them? Have they a taint of illegality? On what account, or for what reason?

Now, it is simply *impossible* for any objection to be suggested against the validity of Romish ordinations, considering that validity to be based on a succession of ordinations from the apostles, that will not lie with equal force against the validity of ordinations coming down in any other supposed channel. If personal immorality in the bishop works invalidity, then, in the nature as well as according to the facts of the case, we have an end of succession. If succession is not good in the Romish Church, then how *can* it be good in any other? The thing is manifestly impossible.

Moreover, it is well known to be a settled principle in high-Churchism that *the Romish ordinations are valid*. Then why this incessant labor and effort to make up some sort of history that will show that English ordinations may be traced independent of Rome? Suppose it were done: what does it establish? These are questions that no man can answer.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT ARE THE SUPPOSED ADVANTAGES OF SUCCESSION?

MR. MACAULAY, the celebrated historian, in a letter on this subject to Mr. Gladstone, an English high-Churchman, asks a question that has never been answered. He inquires, "What does the apostolic succession prove, supposing it to be proved and established?" Merely to prove the truth and existence of the apostolic succession of itself proves nothing that need be proved, unless it can also be shown that the apostolic succession has some benefits or advantages attached to it, or in some way connected with it. Suppose the doctrine of the apostolic succession to be established. It is just the same as though it were not and could not be established, unless some religious advantage stands connected with it. *What does the apostolic succession prove?*

The thing itself, of course, proves just as much, or as little, for high-Churchmen, for the Church of England, for the Protestant Episcopal Church, as it does, or ever did, for any other Churches which may be supposed to have been possessed of the Divine virtue.

If non-prelatical Churches were to-day to acquire the succession, what benefit would they acquire? They would derive the same advantages which high-Churchists and Romanists derive from it—which is manifestly *none*.

The ancient Arian Churches were episcopal, and had cer-

tainly as good claims to succession as any Church could possibly have in that day, and far better claims than any Church can possibly have at the present time, for they lived fifteen hundred years nearer to the apostles. Was the succession, if they had it—and they certainly had it if anybody had—of any benefit to them? Did it protect them against misrule and theological error? So far from this being the case, it was decided by a council of more than three hundred bishops, with Constantine at their head, then and there assembled, at the city of Nice—and that verdict has been uniformly affirmed by the united voice of Christendom ever since—that the Arians taught, for the truth of God, the heresies of Satan. Their succession did not save them from the grossest infidelity.

And has the succession done any more than this for the Roman Catholic establishment? Their claims to succession are acknowledged to be at the present time, and in all time past, as good as high-Churchists pretend to have. And what advantage—what spiritual help—what protection against error—what means of progress in pure religion—do the Romanists enjoy in consequence of the succession if they have it? Confessedly, none. The voice of Christendom is that Popery is a mass of religious corruption, and ecclesiastical putridity, and theological romance, and ministerial infamy, priestcraft, and oppression, such as, a tithe of which, the world never saw beside.

Then, what do successionists propose to do for other Churches? What benefits, advantages, helps, do they propose to confer upon others? Can an answer be given to this question? It is strange, it is unaccountable, it is marvellous, that this has never been attempted.

The claim of high-Churchmen is, that they possess all the advantages and spiritual help which Christ intended to confer upon the world by means of a ministry and a Church.

They do not, by any means, merely claim to have some superior advantages over and above those possessed by other Churches; but that they have *all* these advantages, and that other so-called ministers and Churches have *none*.

Now, it cannot be questioned that Christ intended that the institution of a Church and a ministry was in all time to come to operate in the world as means and instruments of religion and of salvation of a most powerful character. He promised to *be with* the ministry, and *in* the Church, in all time, to give them succor, guidance, and influence. And he has not in all the Bible promised to be anywhere else, in the world, out of the ministry and the hearts and assemblies of Christians to advance his cause. Nay, he has said that he need not be looked for, for he will not be found, elsewhere.

And high-Churchmen claim to have *all* these helps and advantages, if they claim for the succession any benefit. And if they do not claim for it any benefit, then it is useless to desire or seek after it, whether it be true or false. Let us pause a moment and look at this thing.

High-Churchmen go to work in this great warfare against sin, wielding the implements of Almighty grace. There is no Church, no ministry, no sacraments, no Divine promises or Divine helps, outside of them. And who and what are they, as compared with other professing Christians? Let us confine this inquiry for a moment to our own country.

High-Churchmen compose less than half of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. There are in the United States, according to the returns of 1854, over *thirty-seven hundred and fifty thousand* members of the different Churches, exclusive, of course, of Romanists. One hundred thousand of these are members of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Say one half of these are high-Churchmen. Then we have in this country over three million seven hundred thousand professing Christians who repudiate the

succession doctrine, against fifty thousand high-Churchists. The proportion is *seventy-four to one*.

Now, is it not a burlesque upon common sense, is it not a burlesque upon the every-day observation of all men, is it not an insult to reason, to our eyes and our ears, to suppose that these things are true?

In this enlightened country, which claims to be a Christian country—in this land of Bibles, and churches, and gospel preaching, and professing Christians, and missionary enterprise, and religious presses, and Sabbath-schools, and Sabbath days, which stands out and above and beyond any other on any page of the world's history—in *this* country we have a small sect, in one of the smallest Churches in the land, comprising *one-seventy-fourth part* of its professing Christians, which claims, *par excellence*, to be *the* Church, with the whole of the sum total of Christianity, with all the ministry, all the sacraments, all the Divine assistance, all the comfort of the Holy Spirit, all the right and title to the Christianity of the nation!!!

The lexicographers have not furnished the world with the means of expressing that idea, fairly and fully, in English. Is there much modesty in the claim? Fifty thousand Church members or less, with about seven or eight hundred ministers, affect to set up and excommunicate nearly four millions of Christians, with upwards of twenty-six thousand ministers! There are in the United States more than half as many non-prelatical *ministers of the gospel* as there are high-Church members, men, women, and children, “clergymen,” bishops, and all.

But does this sect make up in piety what they lack in numbers? If they have all the religious advantages, they ought to have all the piety. But is this so? Alas, it is feared that, in this examination, we are getting from bad to worse.

It is not the province of the writer, nor of any other man,

to judge of men's standing before God; nor is this an attempt to do any thing of the sort. We are examining into the probable truth of the doctrine of the apostolic succession, and the claims of its professors. And the Saviour has given us a rule which we are to use in all cases where it naturally applies itself, namely, *BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM*. This is a rule of common sense as well as of Divine appointment.

Now, if, on examination, it shall turn out that these forty or fifty thousand high-Churchmen are, notwithstanding the smallness of their numbers, conspicuous and sterling examples of piety, amidst gay, fashionable, worldly-minded Churches, though they be seventy or eighty times over the largest, it will go far to show that their claim to the exclusive benefits of God's grace is at least probable. But *is this so?* Have they *all the piety in the land?*

So far from it, it is as well and as notoriously known as that the sun shines upon the earth in the daytime, that the very reverse is the case. In the Protestant Episcopal Church itself, there is a very marked and apparent difference between the high and the low Church divisions. The latter will compare very favorably, in all the external appearances and apparent fruits of piety, with their fellow-Christians in any part of the country. Whilst, on the contrary, it is notoriously known, that practical piety is not generally looked for among high-Churchmen of either sex. There are many noble and sterling exceptions to this rule; but for the most part—to say the very least that can possibly be said—for the most part, the common gayeties of life are as abundant among them as out in the wicked world. Card-playing, horse-racing, dancing, theatre-going, circus-going, betting, and drinking, are very common among high-Churchmen!!!

Truth is self-sustaining. A proposition that will not sustain itself is not true. High-Churchmen are bound by the

imperative laws of logic to prove their claims to the whole of the advantages God has vouchsafed to his Church and his ministry, by exhibiting before the world an appropriate and corresponding degree of THE FRUITS of those advantages. A tree is not the tree it is named, unless its fruit exhibit the evidences of sameness and identity. Every thing must exhibit the proper and appropriate fruits and evidences of its own nature and character. A Church which claims to be, *par excellence*, "THE CHURCH," above and over and beyond all other Churches, and at the same time exhibits itself in the lowest class of piety, furnishes the most conclusive evidence of its error, and challenges the commiseration and pity of a pious and benevolent people.

To go into the battle-field of the Lord with the implements of Omnipotence in hand; with the sword of the Spirit and the shield of Almighty protection over you; with the blood-stained banner of certain victory leading you onward; with the cohorts of conquest flanking you on either hand, and the shouts of the redeemed resounding in the air with a cheering and deafening acclaim; and return with nothing, absolutely nothing, save the bare name of *succession*, is to make a burlesque of religion, is to reduce holy things to trickery and fables, is to boast of imbecility, is to wipe away all logical reasoning, is to turn the Church of God into a playhouse, and turn the great scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ into senseless ceremony and ball-room piety. *By their fruits ye shall know them.*

And moreover, I have never known the public or private expression of opinion on the part of any man to the effect that succession, or connection with a succession Church, was of any specific or particular religious advantage to any person. They acknowledge the saving faith and evangelical piety of non-prelatical Christians. When brought to the test, they do not pretend to say otherwise than that any man's chance

for heaven is to be measured and reckoned by the measure of his personal piety and devotedness to God, irrespective of the real or supposed legality of the ordination of his minister. Then of what *use* is succession?

But at the same time that we have these concessions, we have the declarations of several high-Church writers—made in the heat of debate, when they are obliged to substitute declarations for arguments—to the effect that there is no salvation outside of the reception of the sacraments and of confirmation at the hands of a succession bishop. Their inconsistencies and self-contradictions are truly marvellous.

It ought to be remarked, however, that the slightest intimations of any religious advantages resulting from the ministrations of succession bishops over and above those of other ministers, is never made, consistently or inconsistently, except in that flank of downright Puseyism, which borders so closely upon that it almost commingles with the territories of Rome. The doctrine is essentially Romish, for it is the doctrine of priest-forgiveness. To prepare a man for heaven is to forgive his sins. This, Christianity teaches, is done by Jesus Christ exclusively. Rome teaches that it is done by a “*priest*.” Prelacy teaches that it is done by a “*bishop*.”

CHAPTER XIII.

SUCCESSION PROVES TOO MUCH, AND THEREFORE PROVES NOTHING.

THERE is another view of this subject, which appears absolutely distinctive of the succession scheme, and which can be fully stated in a moment.

First. It is held by high-Churchmen that the doctrine is *essential* to the being of a Church and of a ministry. It is a *fundamental* Christian doctrine. It is the *law of God*, upon which the ministry and the Church are founded.

Second. It is acknowledged by all Christians, and by none more readily than by high-Church Episcopalians, that an association of men claiming to be a Church of Christ, must set forth in their articles of religion, or creed, or confession of faith, or whatever their bond of compact may be called, all the acknowledged fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Without such a setting forth—whatever more might or might not be deemed necessary—no association of men can rightfully claim to be a Church of Christ.

Third. The doctrine of apostolic succession is not, never was, the doctrine of any Church. It was never affirmed as a tenet, or a truth, or a doctrine of Christianity, by any ecclesiastical body claiming to be, or to act for or on behalf of, any Church. It is the doctrine—said to be—of individual persons, but not of any Church.

Then it follows, of inevitable logical consequence, that there is not a Christian Church on earth.

This is a short argument, but a conclusive one. The premises cannot be denied : the conclusion cannot be resisted.

In all sober earnestness and honesty, I ask sober, thinking men to look at this argument. It lies in a nutshell.

It is asserted on all hands, by the friends and foes of the doctrine of succession, that it is an essential, fundamental Christian doctrine, absolutely *necessary* to the being of a Church and a ministry, or it is *nothing*.

Again. No proposition can be more self-evident in logic, or more universally assented to by all men, than the absolute necessity of a setting forth, in their articles of compact, on the part of any association of men claiming to be a Church, all such doctrines as are acknowledged to be vital or fundamental to the being of a Church. This is a mere truism.

Would an association of men be a Church, whose articles of compact did not acknowledge the Bible a revelation from God?—which did not set forth the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ?—which did not set forth the being of God?—the fall of man?—the death of Christ?—or a future state of reward and punishment? Then, if so, a board of town councilmen may be called a Church—then a railroad company is a Church—then a justice's court is a Church—a mercantile firm is a Church.

High-Churchmen, as well as all other Christians, deny to this, that, and the other association, the characteristics of a Church, because they fail to acknowledge, or set forth, all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and upon no other ground. Men differ as to what doctrines are vital or fundamental, and hence their differences of opinion on this point. But we are now testing this question upon the supposition of its being, as it is claimed, a fundamental doctrine of Christianity.

And we see that not one of the several associations of men on the earth, or which ever was on the earth, is or was a Christian Church, for not one of them does or ever did assert or set forth the doctrine of apostolic succession.

If this is not demonstration, then I acknowledge that, to my mind, the rules of logic are loose and uncertain.

This argument, together with several others in this work, was never, so far as I know or believe, attempted to be answered by any high-Church writer, or other person, in any way whatever. This may be, for aught I know, because they have not been brought forward before. So far as I am apprised, they have not been set forth previously, or, at least, until very recently.

And if this argument cannot be met and set aside fairly, then it is absolutely silly, it is ridiculous, it is nonsense, for men to talk about a *doctrine* of apostolic succession.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ANALOGICAL ARGUMENT.

It is argued in favor of succession, that its authenticity is proved in the same way in which the authenticity of the Bible is proved.

First, it is said that God promised to preserve the Bible pure and unsullied, and we rely upon his promise that he has done so, and believe the Bible to be truly and fairly—the copies which we now read—his word. And so of a succession of ordinations in the ministry. Jesus Christ promised to preserve the succession pure and unsullied, and we ought, in like manner, to believe he has done so.

The answer to this is, First, that there is in the Bible no such promise, nor any promise of any kind respecting or connected with a succession of ordinations. The Saviour promised to *be with* his ministers to the end of time, but said nothing about a connected chain of ordinations. He said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.” And this promise is every day verified out of the succession. Perhaps its consoling benefits are experienced as warmly and fully out as in the supposed succession.

Secondly, it is held that we have the same evidence of the correctness of the regular uninterrupted transmission of ministerial orders by successive ordinations, from bishop to bishop, that we have of the correctness of the successive recopyings and reprintings of the Bible which we now read. And hence

if we receive our present version of the Bible as infallibly true, we should for the same reasons, and with the same proof, receive the present *orders* of ministers as genuine—that is, as having infallibly descended in the same way.

The answer to this is, that we do not by any means rely upon the correctness of the many intermediate copyings and reprintings of the Bible in its chronological descent down to our times, for the belief which we have in the correctness of the present version. Verily, if this were the only ground of confidence in the correctness of our present version of the Bible, it would be rejected to-day, by every sensible man, as being not infallibly genuine.

So far from this mode of transmission being reliable in the case of the Bible, it is well known that many of the copyings and reprintings of the Bible have been very incorrect. Biblical critics, therefore, do not rely upon them, nor pretend to use them. In ascertaining the correctness of the present version of the Bible, they pass over the intermediate time, and compare the present copy with copies of acknowledged correctness, still extant, and which date back very nearly to the days of the apostles. And the correctness of these early copies are tested by comparing them in different countries and different Churches with each other, and by other direct and intrinsic testimony.

Indeed, the Bible would be but a flimsy foundation for Christian hope, if we had to rely for its correctness on the safe keeping of the Church, all along down its chronology. The argument, therefore, has no sort of soundness or substance in it.

The analogical argument would only be good in case we could test a present ordination, directly, without an intermediate succession, with an ordination made by an apostle, or one very near him. This argument, then, to mean any thing, entirely abrogates the idea of *successive* ordinations.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EARLY CANONS.

ANOTHER argument brought forward to sustain the apostolic succession is, that it was made the law of the Church at a very early period. We are told that about the year 200 the Church at Rome passed the following canon, viz. :

“Canon 1. Let a bishop be ordained by two or three bishops.”

But before this canon can be offered in evidence, several things are necessary :

1. It must be shown that the term “bishop,” as used in the canon, means the same as it is now intended to mean, a ruler of pastors and Churches, a diocesan. Whereas it is well known, and *admitted*, that in those days “bishop” meant the pastor of a congregation. This has been abundantly proved.

2. It is necessary to be shown, not merely that that Church passed this canon, but that it was actually in force in all the Churches in the world, and has continued to be the law in all the Churches in the world ever since. For it to have been the law in some place or places, or in some age or ages, amounts to nothing, manifestly.

3. It should be proven also, not only that this was *the law* of the Church—this of itself amounts to nothing—it must be proven that the law was never violated in one single instance. It is not the *law* we are inquiring into, it is the suc-

cession of ordinations. If this was the law, then the only important question is, Was the law *always* observed?

But again. If it be true that this canon was adopted by *the Church*, at the time specified, then it completely destroys the doctrine of apostolic succession at a blow.

The doctrine we are controverting assumes that this law respecting successive ordinations in a line of bishops is a *Divine* law. The argument of non-prelacy is, that bishops were set over presbyters and Churches as a mere human or *Church* regulation. The only question is whether the regulation was a Divine regulation, or a Church regulation. And the canon before us says *the Church* adopted the law, in the year 200, that bishops should ordain.

Very well, that is all we ask for. That is all we have ever contended for—that the bishop is a bishop, and ordains by a mere Church law. Everybody knows that episcopacy has existed in the Church from an early period. This is not the question. The question is whether it existed in pursuance of a *Divine* or a *human* law. And now we are informed, by high-Churchmen themselves, that episcopacy originated in a *canon of the Church*. Very well; that is all that is asked for.

It is hardly to be presumed that the Church made a law requiring ordinations to be performed by bishops when this was already the law of God, well known as it must have been.

To try to avoid this difficulty, it has been said by Mr. Yenger, a very able writer on this subject, that this canon only *prescribed the manner* in which ordinations should be made. But this does not get rid of the difficulty; for the canon does not attempt to prescribe any *manner* in which ordinations shall be made. It only says that two or three bishops shall do the work. The canon is instant death to prelacy.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUCCESSION IS INCONSISTENT WITH PROTESTANTISM.

THE principles of apostolic succession and those of Protestantism are absolutely antagonistical and irreconcilable. A man who understands the questions cannot by possibility be at the same time a successionist and a Protestant. This point needs but a brief explanation to make it so clear as to remove the possibility of fair debate.

The doctrine of succession affirms that the *authority* of a minister is derived only by a succession of commissions which descends personally in a line of bishops, tactually, from the apostles to each minister of the present day. Outside of this line of connecting commissions there is no commission, no authority to preach, no sacraments, no Church. These last-mentioned consequences flow naturally and logically from the first-mentioned premises.

Now, what is Protestantism? It is the right in Christians, in all Christians, of *practical* PROTEST against the *authority* of the Church, upon the ground that the Church, in the teachings of its ministry, has departed from the Bible, and teaches contrary to its teachings.

This right to protest against the Church and depart from her arises from this simple consideration: that it is the imperative and absolute duty of Christians to obey Christ, as he has expressed himself in the Bible. Now, if the Church should teach contrary to the Bible, the Christian must neces-

sarily repudiate the one or the other. And his absolute duty to obey the Bible gives him the right, nay, makes it his duty, to *protest* against the Church, and requires him to repudiate *her* teachings in that event.

This is precisely the thing, and the only thing, that was done by Luther and his associates at the Reformation. A portion of the Church *protested* against the teachings and authority of the then existing organized Church. Ministers and people went *out of*, and *away from*, the existing Church, repudiating her *authority* and her teachings, and organized a new Church, or, what is the same thing, continued a reformed Church. And Protestants still continue so to protest against both the *authority* and the *teachings* of Rome.

Now, how could these protesting ministers go off from the Church, repudiating her authority, and at the same time continue to preach by or in virtue of her authority? This is a plain solecism. The protesting ministers preached, if they preached at all, by authority derived *otherwise* than from the ministers against whose authority and teachings they protested. They could not do both. They could not at the same time protest against and repudiate the authority of the then existing Church, and also preach under and by virtue of such authority. Those who do the latter do not *protest*, and so are not Protestants.

This was the distinction, and the only distinction, which separated between those who adhered to the Romish Church, and those who followed Luther and the Reformers. And it is the only essential principle of distinction between Romanists and Reformers to the present day.

There are many practices and dogmas of faith in the Romish Church which Protestants repudiate and oppose, and which Roman Catholics adhere to and observe. But what is the *ground* of adherence on the one hand, and of repudiation on the other? This is it. Romanists feel themselves bound to adhere to the Church's, or, what is the same thing with

them, the minister's *authority*. They are bound to adhere to this authority, because they say it is Divine authority. And it is Divine authority because it has descended from the lips and hands of Jesus Christ in a line of connecting commissions.

And the authority is repudiated by Protestants, because they take the other hand, and say, We are not bound absolutely by the bishop: we do not acknowledge the binding force of such authority, so transmitted. And how do they get clear of such authority? They must be bound absolutely, by the authority of Christ, descended in some way. They get clear of it in this way: they say the Bible is the authority; the Bible is the rule; the Bible is the law; and not the minister or the Church.

And this, after all, is the only *principle* of distinction between Romanism and Protestantism. The Romanist says the minister has the true and proper authority, descended from Christ: it has been transmitted to him in this line of successive ordinations. The Protestant says no: this cannot be authority absolutely binding; because, for one reason, it comes through a fallible, and not an infallible, channel of transmission: the Bible forms the only infallible channel of transmission: we are absolutely bound by it. Those who leave the Bible leave the imperative law: they go away from the Church and the true authority, for the true Church *must* be where the Bible is, because the Bible is the true authority.

Hence Protestant Christians regulate their conduct by the Bible, and Romanists feel themselves absolutely bound by the ministry.

This doctrine of transmitted authority through the persons of bishops, has been attempted to be brought down through the scenes of the Reformation, and reconciled with the principles thereof, by this consideration: That the protesting ministers at the Reformation, when they went out from the Romish Church, carried with them their *orders*—that is, their

authority to preach. This is a self-contradiction. How could they carry with them authority to preach, and at the same time protest against such authority?

If the Romish bishops, at the Reformation, had the exclusive authority to preach, derived by a succession of commissions, then those who acknowledged this as being the source and essence of *their* authority, were bound to preach, if they preached at all, under and in obedience to such authority; and so *they* could not protest against it. *They* were not Protestants, for they did not protest.

But some of the Romish ministers did protest, and became Protestants. Of course they threw off and repudiated the binding force of authority derived in *that way*. Of course it is acknowledged that the Romish bishops had authority to preach, and that the Protestant ministers had authority to preach. But certainly the latter, after they became Protestants, preached, if they preached at all, in virtue of some *other* authority than that against which they protested.

But, moreover, let us see what became of the authority to preach—or orders—which the protesting ministers were supposed to have carried with them from the Romish communion. *They were all excommunicated!* The same Church, the same authority, which conferred the orders, *took them away*, and left every man, so far as his authority was concerned, not even a layman, but a heretic!

Now, it can hardly be said that they preached by authority derived from successive ordinations through the former Church, and which authority they carried with them out of the Romish Church. Where are the orders, where is the authority of a minister who is solemnly excommunicated by the Church which conferred the orders and gave the authority?

The reforming ministers continued to preach, utterly disregarding the excommunication—nay, contemptuously committing the bull to the flames; and they continue to preach

to this day. By what *authority* do they preach? Whatever authority they may be supposed to have, it is certainly *some other* than that which is supposed to have been derived through the chain of commissions or the apostolic succession.

Hitherto the argument respecting the transmission of authority through the scenes of the Reformation to the Anglican Church, upon the principle of the apostolic succession, has, it would seem, been considered to turn upon the question whether a Romish bishop, truly in orders, did become a Protestant, and so ordain in the Protestant Church? But surely this cannot be an important, certainly not a vital, question. Because, supposing such to be the case, he is now a Protestant, and, *as such*, he could not exercise an authority, in any official sense, with which he became invested as a Roman Catholic.

It will not, it is presumed, be supposed by any, that *official authority*, or *power*, may be lawfully exercised, *in spite* of the authority which lawfully and properly conferred it. This is supposing that two *lawful* things may *lawfully* oppose, and fight, and destroy each other, or that *lawful* and *unlawful* are the same.

I do not consider the famous question respecting the ordination of Archbishop Parker—whether he was or was not truly ordained at Lambeth, by Bishop Barlow, in pursuance of the queen's commission, and whether Barlow was or was not truly ordained by a bishop; and the famous Nag's-Head question—whether Parker was or was not ordained at the Nag's-Head Tavern,—I do not, I say, regard these contested questions as of much importance. The ordinations, if performed at all, were certainly not performed in pursuance of the authority of the Church of Rome.

The question is, Where is the authority of the Reforming bishops, *which they derived through the succession of ordinations from former bishops?* Manifestly there is none. We

must take the one course or the other. If we hold to the authority derived by succession, very well; then we do not protest—are not Protestants. If we repudiate that authority, so derived, protest against its binding force, and, still further, if the Church which conferred the authority repudiates us, and protests against our using the authority so conferred, then we are Protestants; and if we continue to preach, we either preach without authority, or by virtue of *some other* authority than that derived by succession.

It is a contradiction in terms to suppose a man may preach, or do any thing else, by the authority of a Church without the consent of such Church; because authority can neither be conferred, or retained after being conferred, otherwise than by the consent and voluntary action of the person or body conferring the authority. To suppose that Protestant ministers preached, in the sixteenth century, or any other century, by authority derived *in any way* from the Church of Rome, is to suppose an absurdity. As Protestant ministers, we either have no authority—as the Romanists hold—or else we have obtained authority from some other source. Nothing can be more certain and conclusive than this, that we have no authority *from Rome* to preach.

Suppose a minister to be excommunicated from the Church of England. Can he come to America, or stay in England, and continue to preach and exercise all the functions of a minister, in virtue of the authority which he once had, and of which he has been legally deprived? That supposes as flat a contradiction as can be stated in language. To be excommunicated means to be *deprived of authority*, and of all Church privileges.

Suppose a man solemnly renounces his connection with a Church—any Church—can he, *after that*, preach and exercise ministerial functions in virtue of authority thus renounced?

These cases precisely fit the circumstances and condition and relation of the Romish and Protestant Churches.

These principles were perfectly understood by the Reformers. No man or set of men ever did or could more completely denounce and repudiate the doctrine of transmitted authority in the Church, or apostolic succession, than did the Reformers in the very first acts of reorganization which they performed.

The beginning of the reformed Church might perhaps be dated at the city of Spire, in 1526. D'Aubigné says: "A constitution was now to be given to the renovated Church." The providence of God had called away the Pope and the Emperor, the two great enemies of the Reformation, to war with each other; which gave the Reformers time for repose, reflection, and better organization.

The great historian of the Reformation says:

"After three days' discussion, which had been a continual triumph for the evangelical doctrine, men were elected and commissioned to constitute the Churches of Hesse in accordance with the word of God. They were more than three days occupied in the task, and then their new constitution was published in the name of the synod.

"The first ecclesiastical constitution produced by the Reformation should have a place in history, so much the more as it was then set forward as a model for the new Churches of Christendom."

The following are some of the features of this constitution:

"The Church can only be taught and governed by the word of its Sovereign Pastor. Whoever has recourse to any other word shall be deposed and excommunicated.

"Every pious man, learned in the word of God, whatever be his condition, may be elected bishop if he desire it, for he is called inwardly of God.

"Let no one believe that by a bishop we understand any thing else than a simple minister of the word of God.

"The ministers are servants, and consequently they ought not to be lords, princes, or governors.

“Let the faithful assemble and choose their bishops and deacons.” See D’Aubigné’s History of the Reformation, first sixteen books in one volume, pp. 438, 439.

The very “PROTEST” itself, from which Protestants take their name, which was read before the diet of Spire on the memorable 19th of April, 1529, and which, as D’Aubigné, as well as the world, declares contains “the very essence of Protestantism,” sets forth this same doctrine, and maintains that the gospel is to be ministered in all things according to its own writing in opposition to the Romish doctrine of transmitted authority through the historic medium of *the Church*. See D’Aubigné, p. 451.

The only difficulty that ever existed between the Reformers on the one hand and the Romanists on the other: the only dispute or difference between Protestants and Romanists now, of a primary or fundamental character, is this: Are we to be governed, in ecclesiastical and religious matters, by the *authority* of the ministers, or the *authority* of the Bible?

Romanists hold to the former—Protestants maintain the latter.

The famous “*Augsburg Confession*,” which is generally and justly considered the Magna Charta of the Reformation, holds the same doctrine, and confines the Christian ministry to the word of God solely, repudiating all supposed Divine authority which the Church furnishes through *its* channel of transmission.

Here lies the very point of distinction between Protestantism and Romanism, viz.: a ministry deriving its authority direct from the written word of God, recognized by the ordination of the actually existing Church, on the one hand and a ministry deriving its authority from a historic Church of past existence, through the medium of transmission by successive commissions, on the other. The one is *Bible Christianity*, the other is *Church Christianity*.

And again. This doctrine of authority from Christ coming down through a series of ordinations *cannot possibly* be the doctrine of Protestants, from the consideration that Protestants believe personal piety, religion in spirit, Christianity in essence, to be an essential ingredient in the composition of a true Church of Christ. But if transmitted authority be the true and only proper authority of a minister, then any man may be a minister who will submit to the imposition of the hands of a bishop and listen to the ceremony. An infidel may be a bishop, and his followers a Church. He has the "commission," and they receive his ministry. Here is a true ministry without piety, and a true Church without Christianity! This may be allowable, and may and does sometimes happen in Romanism, but it subverts *every* principle of Protestantism.

CHAPTER XVII.

“SUCCESSION” SCHISMATICAL.

D'AUBIGNE, in his fifth volume of the History of the Reformation, at pages 4 and 5 speaks as follows :

“A second motive forced the author to acknowledge the necessity of a true history of the English Reformation. An active party in the Episcopalian Church is reviving, with zeal, perseverance, and talent, the principles of Roman Catholicism, and striving to impose them on the Reformed Church of England, and incessantly attacking the foundations of evangelical Christianity. A number of young men in the universities, seduced by that deceitful *mirage* which some of their teachers have placed before their eyes, are launching out into clerical and superstitious theories, and running the risk of falling, sooner or later, as many have done already, into the ever-yawning gulf of Popery. We must, therefore, call to mind the reforming principles which were proclaimed from the very commencement of this great transformation.”

It is well known to all persons acquainted with Church history that these English “principles of Roman Catholicism” had their origin in a schism in the Church of England in the year 1680, headed by Archbishop Sancroft, in which revolt he and his associates, seven other bishops, were deposed. They left the Church because it would not go with them in their high notions of kingly and episcopal prerogative by Di-

vine right of succession ; and, as Mosheim says, (*Ecclesiastical History*, vol. iv., p. 112,) “formed a new Episcopal Church, which differed in certain points of doctrine, and certain circumstances of public worship, from the established Church of England.”

“The nonjurors, or high-Churchmen,” says Mosheim, same volume, page 113, “who boast with peculiar ostentation of their orthodoxy, and treat the low Church as unsound and schismatical, differ in several things from the members of the Episcopal Church in its present establishment.”

This is no new thing in the world. It has been heard of before and since a thousand times, that an innovating and schismatical party, either in the Church or the state, in order to make a show of innocence, of regularity, and legality, are the first to cry out “schism,” “party,” “heresy.”

This famous schism in the English Church, the seeds of which were first sown by Laud in 1604, and which was reared into maturity by Sancroft and his fellow-nonjurors, and was so zealously defended by the eccentric Henry Dodwell, is alive at this day. The unfortunate connection in England between the Church and the state has alone given it opportunity to live. The party lately revived in England under the supervision of the famous semi-Papist, Dr. Pusey, and his followers and abettors in and around the University of Oxford.

Well may the pious and learned D'Aubigné say it is carrying many “into the ever-yawning gulf of Popery.” The increasing popularity, and the increased and increasing circulation of the Bible over the world, will, it is confidently believed, soon bring about a state of things which will require a speedy return of the entire party to simple Christianity, or an advance a step or two farther into the “gulf” to which its principles so naturally lead.

There are some facts and circumstances connected with this schism that are truly remarkable.

In the first place, it is remarkable that it should have continued to exist and to show a bold front so long. Secondly, it is remarkable that all this while it should have remained *legally* in the pale of the Church. But it is still more remarkable that it should have so managed, by artifice, seeming unconcern, boldness, mildness, and audacity, as to claim before the world, and to have superinduced the belief in the world, to some extent, that it really changed places in the Church with the Church itself! According to its claims, it is even now, both in England and in this country, *the Church!*

High-Churchmen think no more of styling themselves "the Church," in their writings, publications, etc., than of making the most commonplace remark. Nay, much more than this: they have caused it to be believed in the world, to a considerable extent, among well-informed persons, who have not taken the trouble to look or inquire into their pretensions, that the high-Church doctrines of apostolic succession and episcopal prerogative are really the doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and of the Church of England.

This is a great error. *The doctrine of apostolic succession never was the doctrine of any Church.* So far from its ever having been the doctrine of any Church, it never was avowed or affirmed as a doctrine or tenet by any body of men, acting in any capacity, and claiming to represent or speak in behalf of any Church in Christendom, so far as is known to ecclesiastical history. Let him who questions it make the denial.

It may, perhaps, be supposed that an exception ought to be made to this general remark in favor of the Romish semi-ecclesiastical institution; but the facts do not require it. The doctrine of the papists, if there can be said to be any doctrine among them on the subject, is that the right to ordain inheres exclusively in the pope, or bishop of the Church of Rome. He has this right, of course, because he has *all* right; and his practice is to dispense this authority among his bishops at

pleasure. But the Church of Rome never adopted the doctrine of the apostolic succession.

So, then, the apostolic succession party, first raised up avowedly as a schism by Laud, Sancroft, and Dodwell, was resuscitated by Pusey as the Church's orthodoxy! And even in this country, where we have no king as its natural foundation and prototype, it has gained some foothold. Here we have a party in a Church—an innovation, an internal schism—setting up and teaching for fundamental, primary, and essential doctrines of Christianity, things which the Church never heard of, which she repudiates, does not own, does not acknowledge.

And in setting forth these new, peculiar doctrines of innovation and schism, its partisans, with *sang-froid* and indifference most remarkable, claim to be teaching the very straitest doctrines of *the Church!*

In these things the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country is suffering greatly; and in England the Established Church, it is feared, is suffering still worse. But that “ever-yawning gulf,” of which D'Aubigné speaks, will, in all likelihood, ere long be called upon to decide the contest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NAKED QUESTION.

WE come now for the first time to touch more *directly* upon the doctrine of apostolic succession. So far as the simple question of apostolic succession is concerned, all that has been previously said might very easily have been dispensed with. The various questions which have been brought forward under this general head of our subject are, however, deemed necessary to a proper elucidation of the ecclesiastical constitution; and they are not, perhaps, improperly classed in the category where they are placed. But we now come to take a direct hold of the question of apostolic succession, and to redeem our former pledges on this point; for something was really intended to be meant when it was promised that it should be looked at.

It is now to be seen that there is no such debatable question as “apostolic succession:” that it is properly and philosophically a figment; never was, never *could be* believed by any man of moderate acquaintance with the subject, otherwise than by a most egregious blunder; that it is a question not debatable—an argument without an issue.

The idea of apostolic succession naturally divides itself into two questions, or aspects. First, Does the theory of Christianity require, in order to the existence of a Church and ministry, such a succession of ordinations? Secondly, Has

that succession been actually preserved? These questions, of course, cover the entire ground intended to be occupied.

Now, if the first question is to be answered in the affirmative, and the second cannot be, then it follows of necessity that a Church does not exist. For if the indispensable divine conditions of a Church do not exist, of course the Church does not.

It must, therefore, appear that both these questions are *claimed to be* answered in the affirmative, before any issue can arise on the subject. There must be two sides to a debatable question. The propositions on either side must antagonize, and meet in issue with each other.

Now, *is it claimed*, on the part of high-Churchmen, that the theory of Christianity requires succession, and also, that the succession exists? The first branch of this question is conceded. It is claimed by high-Churchmen that the system of Christianity does require a succession, in order to the existence of a ministry or a Church. But this question alone—unless they affirm the existence of succession as a fact—cannot be debated for any other purpose than to inquire whether a Church and ministry exist at all. And this question is notoriously not in issue. For if they do not affirm both the abstract doctrine, and also the fact of the historic existence of succession, there is manifestly nothing to debate about. If the theory or abstract doctrine be a true doctrine, and the absolute requirement, the succession as a fact, be wanting, then there is neither Church nor ministry to debate about.

We inquire, then, Do they affirm the fact of succession? And we answer, *They do not*. And this we are now to show, *beyond question*, or fail to sustain the propositions we have previously laid down.

A question of fact, in issue, or supposed to be in issue, cannot be said to be affirmed by one party and denied by the

other, in any logical sense, without the presentation of *some* relevant testimony to sustain the affirmation. Let this point be restated and left clear. One party states a *fact*, which is denied on the other hand. Now, this fact cannot be said to be in issue between the parties, in a debatable form, until some testimony on the point be submitted to sustain the truth of the fact affirmed. To say of a fact, by opposing parties, "It is," "It is not"—"It is," "It is not," is not argument. The negative cannot produce proof. The affirmant must produce testimony to sustain the allegation; and then the *debate* is only an inquiry whether this testimony, with rebutting testimony, if any be produced, put against it, amounts to proof.

Now, the fact of apostolic succession—that is, the fact that successive ordinations, in an unbroken chain, have been kept up in the Church from the apostles to the present day—is supposed to be stated by high-Churchmen; and is denied on the other hand. And it is alleged that this question is not in issue between the supposed disputants, for the reason that the party affirming does not produce testimony to prove the fact affirmed.

Of course it is not here pretended to be meant that high-Churchmen do not produce *sufficient* testimony to sustain their allegation. This would be a mere idle begging of the question. The issue is joined, and the question rendered debatable, whenever *any* testimony is produced that is relevant to the issue. Here is the point. There has not been *any* testimony produced on this question. This is the point that is to be made clear.

Let it be remembered that we are now only looking at the *fact* of a succession of ordinations. Let us proceed slowly and securely. The ground we are now travelling over may not be as familiar to the reader as to the writer. We will therefore walk moderately just along here.

The production of a *witness* to prove a fact is not always

necessarily the production of *testimony*; because the witness may say he does not know any thing about the fact in question, though he may know several things about several other facts.

This is precisely the condition of high-Churchmen. They have produced several *witnesses*; but every one, when called upon to speak, tells us that he knows nothing about the fact of which he is inquired.

Now, let us see if this is not the case. Let us look at the several things which these witnesses say; and if *any one says one word about or in relation to the fact* of apostolic succession, then the present argument has failed, and this chapter is an empty boast.

We must distinguish between testimony introduced to prove the *fact* of succession, from that which relates to the *doctrine* of succession, as a Bible doctrine. It is admitted that they produce testimony—such as it is—on this latter point; but it is denied that they produce *any* testimony on the former.

Arguments inquiring into the question of “three orders” in the ministry, do not relate to the fact of succession, no matter what may be alleged, or proved, or failed to be proved, in relation thereto. Neither do arguments about “episcopacy,” or about the sentiments or opinions of the apostles, or the Fathers, or of Christ himself, relate to the question of the *fact* of succession, any more than they relate to questions in astronomy or geography.

The question of *the fact of succession* is, of course, a historic question. It inquires into several historical facts. It inquires whether an apostle of Jesus Christ ordained a certain man, who ordained a certain other man, who ordained a certain other man, who ordained a certain other man, and so on, down the catalogue of men’s lives, to the present day. Nothing but history can prove a historic question. Of

course there is nothing in the Bible that can testify on this question, because the Bible was written before, or about the time, these historic facts are supposed to have begun to occur.

No testimony, therefore, can be relevant to the question before us but historic testimony. And this history must claim to lie along the chronology of the Church, from the Christian era until the present time.

We are now prepared to look at the witnesses high-Churchmen produce, and see whether the testimony which they utter does or does not relate to the question of the fact of apostolic succession. If it does, this argument defeats itself; if it does not, it is sustained.

There are two witnesses, and only two, that have ever been brought forward by high-Churchmen, for the purpose of attempting to sustain this point. The first is, *the canons of the Church*. We will look at this.

It is said that as early as about the year 200 a canon of the Church required that a bishop should be ordained by two or three bishops. We have looked at this supposed canon, and the consequences which flow from it, in a former chapter, to which the reader is referred.

The rules of the Church, however, no matter when or by whom they were adopted, or how numerous they were, do not relate to the question before us. They only direct what Church officers or members must *do*. They do not tell us what they *have done*. And the question, What has been done? is what we are looking at. Suppose it were shown that, from the year 200, or 100, to the present time, the law of the Church was, that the apostolic succession must be kept up. That does not show that it *was* kept up. The law of the Church has been, from the beginning, in all parts of the Church, to the present hour, that its officers and members must be pious; but that does not prove that they *were* invariably pious.

We interrogate the witness—the law of the Church—whether the succession of ordinations was or was not invariably kept up? And the answer is, that in the year 200 a canon was passed, requiring that a bishop should be ordained by two or three bishops; and that in a few, perhaps two or three, other places in the Church, in different ages and in a few different countries, similar laws were passed. Of this, however, we are not specially informed.

But that does not answer the question. It is manifest, therefore, that the law of the Church does not know any thing about the question in hand, does not pretend to know or to say a word, *pro* or *con*, in relation to it. In the nature of the case, it cannot. A *law* is a *rule*, not a *fact*. History is fact, or a record of facts; and, of course, nothing can prove a fact of past existence but *history*.

Moreover, the law of the Church to which we are referred, it is not pretended existed *all the time* in *all parts* of the Church. It is not pretended that, *invariably*, the *law* of the Church says any particular thing on any question of discipline.

It is manifest, therefore, that this witness must be dismissed. He does not pretend to know any thing about the question propounded. And in the very nature of the case, he could not know.

Of what avail could be the law of the Church requiring ordinations to be made by bishops, or in any other particular way, in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, when it is well known by every one, and acknowledged by all, that *all* the laws of the Church were notoriously and flagrantly violated as a common thing?

Moreover, the law of the Church does not pretend even to *say* that a bishop, what is now called a bishop, shall ordain. It says a “bishop,” meaning a pastor of a Church, shall ordain. It has been already proved that “bishop” then

meant pastor. So that the law of the Church, according to its true meaning, is complied with now, every day, by all orthodox Churches. Pastors or presbyters ordain in all the Churches.

The next witness brought forward is *history*. Here we have, at least, a competent witness—one that, in the nature of the case, could or might know all about the question in hand—if he chanced to know. And here is, in fact, the only witness which, in the very nature of the case, can know any thing about this question, because it is a *historic* question. A mathematical question must be proved by mathematics; a logical question must be proved by logic; a historic question must be proved by history.

Now, let us see what history says, or purports to say, on this question. We will look into every historic fact which is adduced or pretended to be adduced. And if it is pretended by *any man* that history says *any thing* conclusive on this point, as to the truth of this fact, then this argument fails; otherwise it stands good.

It is admitted that history is able to testify, in many instances, of bishops ordaining bishops, meaning prelates. Many such ordinations are known to have been performed in our own times, within our own knowledge. *It is claimed*, too, that such ordinations were performed in ancient times, and occasionally in other parts of the history of the Church. All this is admitted; that is, in *this* argument it is admitted, for we are bound to admit all that any man *claims* as a historic fact pertaining to this question.

The question is, Is it claimed by any man that history purports to prove a succession, an uninterrupted chain of ordinations, from the apostles to the present time? If this fact, which is the fact of succession, is claimed to be supported by the production of any historic facts, or any facts which are claimed to be historic, then this argument is defeated.

The only historic fact which was ever attempted to be produced by any writer on the apostolic succession, is the following list of bishops. It is said by Chapin and others that there are two or three similar lists in the early part of the history of the Church, which connect with this, about in the sixth or seventh centuries. Of course these lists furnish the same kind of testimony as this one; in truth, they are but portions of this. This list is the one most relied upon by high-Churchmen, and therefore I prefer to use it. It is copied from an official pamphlet of the "Protestant Episcopal Tract Society," No. 174, and is found in almost all their publications on this subject. The remarks which precede and follow the list accompany it in those publications everywhere, so far as I have seen.

"But the question is often asked, 'Can the succession be traced up step by step to the apostles? Is there no breach in it which would invalidate the whole?' The Master's *promise*, 'Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,' is enough to assure the humble believer that no such breach has occurred, or can occur to the end of the world. Besides, the utmost pains have always been taken in every branch of the Church to keep the succession regular and pure. *Diocesan* succession and *apostolical* succession are two distinct things. As in Maryland, for example, we have had four bishops; but no one of them has been concerned in the consecration of his successors. So that a vacancy or interregnum in a particular diocese—or in fifty or a hundred dioceses, even of long continuance, does not affect the succession in the least. One of the apostolical canons enjoins that *two or three* bishops, at least, shall unite in every consecration. The succession, therefore, does not depend upon a line of single bishops in one diocese running back to the apostles—because every bishop has had at least three to ordain him, either one of whom had power to perpetuate the succession. How

rapidly do the securities multiply as we go back ! Bishop Whittingham had three to ordain him ; his ordainers had nine ; at the third step there were twenty-seven ; at the fourth, eighty-one ; at the fifth, two hundred and forty-three ; and so on, increasing in a threefold proportion. Now if any one of the entire number to whom Bishop W.'s consecration may be traced back had a valid ordination, the succession is in him, and he can transmit it to any other in whose consecration he may assist. The securities, therefore, are incalculably strong ; and the claim of any duly consecrated bishop to the apostolic succession is more certain than that of any monarch upon earth to his hereditary crown. Lists of the apostolical succession, in descent from the different apostles, have been carefully preserved by Eusebius and other early writers, and they have been continued in different lines down to the present day. Any reader who desires to consult them is referred to *Percival* on Apostolical Succession, and *Chapin's* Primitive Church. Rome may trace its line to St. Peter—the Greeks to St. Paul—the Syrians and Nestorians to St. Thomas, and the American Episcopal Church to St. John.

“Bishop White, the head of the American line of bishops, was consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury. We will therefore present a list beginning with St. John, and coming through the Episcopate of Lyons, in France or Gaul, and that of Canterbury in England, till it connects with ours in the United States of America.

ST. JOHN.

1. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna.

BISHOPS OF LYONS.

1. Pothinus.
2. Irenæus.
3. Zacharias.
4. Elias.
5. Faustinus.

6. Verus.

7. Julius.
8. Ptolemy.
9. Vocius.
10. Maximus.
11. Tetradius.
12. Verissimus.
13. Justus.

	A. D.
14. Albinus.	46. Æthelred, 1..... 793
15. Martin.	47. Wulfred..... 803
16. Antiochus.	48. Theogild, <i>or</i> Feogild, 830
17. Elpidius.	consecrated June 5th,
18. Sicarius.	and died September 3d.
19. Eucherius.	49. Ceolnoth, Sept..... 830
20. Patiens.	50. Æthelred, 2d..... 871
21. Lupicinus.	51. Phlegmund..... 891
22. Rusticus.	52. Athelm, <i>or</i> Adelm..... 923
23. Stephanus.	53. Wulfelm 928
24. Viventiolus.	54. Odo Severus..... 941
25. Eucherius, 2.	55. Dunstan 959
26. Lupus.	56. Æthelgar..... 988
27. Licontius.	57. Siricus 989
28. Sacerdos.	58. Aluricus, <i>or</i> Alfricus..... 996
29. Nicetus.	59. Elphege.....1005
30. Priscus.	60. Living, <i>or</i> Leoning, <i>or</i>
31. ÆTHERIUS. A. D. 589.	Elkskan.....1013
CANTERBURY.	61. Agelnoth, <i>or</i> Æthelnot...1020
32. A. D. 596. AUGUSTIN, mis-	62. Edsin, <i>or</i> Elsin.....1038
sionary to the Anglo-Sax-	63. Robert Gemeticensis.....1050
33d ons, was consecrated by	64. Stigand1052
from VIRGILIUS, 24th Bishop	65. Lanfranc.....1070
St. of Arles, assisted by	66. Anselm.....1093
John. ÆTHERIUS, 31st Bishop	67. Rodulph1114
of Lyons. A. D.	68. William Corbell.....1122
34. Lawrence..... 605	69. Theobold1138
35. Mellitus..... 619	70. Thomas à Becket.....1162
36. Justus..... 624	71. Richard.....1174
37. Honorius..... 634	72. Baldwin Fordensis.....1184
38. Adeodatus..... 654	73. Reginald Fitz Joceline...1191
39. Theodore 668	74. Hubert Walten.....1193
40. Brithwald 693	75. Stephen Langton.....1207
41. Tatwine..... 734	76. Richard Wethersfield....1229
42. Nothelm 735	77. Edmund1234
43. Cuthbert..... 742	78. Boniface1245
44. Bregwin 759	79. Robert Kilwarby.....1272
45. Lambert..... 763	80. John Peckham.....1278

A. D.	A. D.
81. Robert Winchelsea.....1294	104. Richard Bancroft.....1604
82. Walter Reynold.....1313	105. George Abbott.....1611
83. Simon Mepham.....1328	106. William Laud.....1633
84. John Stratford.....1333	107. William Juxon.....1660
85. Thomas Bradwardine...1348	108. Gilbert Sheldon.....1663
86. Simon Islip.....1349	109. William Sancroft.....1677
87. Simon Langham.....1366	110. John Tillotson.....1691
88. William Whittlesey.....1368	111. Thomas Tennison.....1694
89. Simon Sudbury.....1375	112. William Wake.....1715
90. William Courtnay.....1381	113. John Potter.....1737
91. Thomas Arundel.....1396	114. Thomas Secker.....1738
92. Henry Chichely1414	115. Thomas Herring.....1747
93. John Stafford.....1443	116. Matthew Hutton.....1757
94. John Kemp.....1452	117. Frederick Cornwallis...1768
95. Thomas Bourcher.....1454	118. John Moore.....1783
96. John Morton.....1486	119. From St. John, is WILLIAM
97. Henry Dean.....1501	WHITE, of Pennsylvania, con-
98. William Wareham.....1503	secrated February 4th, 1787,
99. THOMAS CRANMER.....1533	by John Moore, Archbishop
100. Reginald Pole.....1555	of Canterbury, assisted by the
101. Matthew Parker.....1559	Archbishop of York, the Bish-
102. Edmund Grindall, Dec. 1573	op of Bath and Wells, and the
103. John Whitgift1583	Bishop of Peterborough.

“The compilers of the list from which the above was taken have consulted the best authorities, and no more doubt of its authenticity can be entertained, than of any chronological table of historical events, or list of the sovereigns of any country, drawn from its official registers and archives. The dates attached to the names of the Archbishops of Canterbury indicate, in several instances, not the time of their consecration, but of their translation to that see.”

Perhaps it might be satisfactory to some to see another list. The following is different from the foregoing prior to the year 590 or 589, when they blend together in the see of Canter-

bury. The difference between them is, that the first list purports to lie in the see of Lyons from the apostolic days until the year 589, and the following, in the same period, purports to lie in the see of Rome. It will be seen that there is a slight error or discrepancy in the two lists, as to the date of the transfer of Augustin to England. This error is of no consequence.

“SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS.

PROVING THAT FROM THE AGE OF THE APOSTLES DOWNWARD, THE ORDER OF BISHOPS, AS DISTINCT FROM THOSE OF THE PRESBYTERS AND DEACONS, HAS EXISTED IN THE CHURCH

“The succession of the bishops of the Roman Church, especially of the earliest of their number, is full of intricacy. Little attention was paid to the minutiae of dates and successions by the earlier Christian historians, and the consequence is, that moderns are unable accurately to determine these particulars.

“It is agreed by all that the apostles Peter and Paul founded the Roman episcopate. After their martyrdom, it is impossible to determine the dates of the bishops before the close of the first century. It would appear, however, that the Jewish and Gentile converts were for a time under the government of distinct bishops; Linus, succeeded by Cletus or Anacletus, having the government of the Jewish Christians, while Clement bore the episcopal rule over the Gentile converts. The latter probably survived the second or third of his contemporary bishops, (for it is uncertain whether the names of Cletus and Anacletus designate the same individual or consecutive bishops,) and united the government of both bodies of Christians, now sufficiently amalgamated to suffer a common discipline in his own person. He was succeeded about

A. D.	A. D.
100 by Evarestus, who was suc- ceeded by	366 Damasus I.,
108 Alexander,	385 Siricius,
117 Xystus, or Sixtus I.,	398 Anastasius I.,
127 Telesphorus,	402 Innocent I.,
138 Hyginus,	417 Zosimus,
150 Pius I.,	418 Boniface I.,
153 Anicetus,	423 Celestine I.,
162 Soter,	432 Sixtus III.,
172 Eleutherius,	440 Leo I., or, <i>the Great</i> ,
185 Victor I.,	461 Hilarius,
196 Zephyrinus,	467 Simplicius,
217 Calixtus I.,	483 Felix III.,
222 Urban I.,	492 Gelasius I.,
231 Pontianus,	496 Anastasius II.,
235 Anteros,	498 Symmachus,
236 Fabianus,	514 Hormisdas,
251 Cornelius,	523 John I.,
252 Lucius I.,	526 Felix IV.,
255 Stephanus,	530 Boniface II.,
258 Sixtus II.,	532 John II.,
259 Dionysius,	535 Agapetus I.,
269 Felix I.,	536 Sylverius,
275 Eutychianus,	555 Vigilius,
283 Caius,	556 Pelagius I.,
296 Marcellinus,	561 John III.,
308 Marcellus I.,	575 Benedict I.,
310 Eusebius,	578 Pelagius II.,
310 Melchiades,	590 Gregory I., or, <i>the Great</i> , who sent Augustin, a monk, mis- sionary to England, and, with the consent of Ethelbert, King of Kent, consecrated him first Archbishop of Canterbury."
314 Silvester I.,	
336 Mark,	
337 Julius I.,	
352 Liberius,	

Not a word is to be said with regard to the doubt expressed by high-Churchmen in introducing this last list, as to its historic correctness. The historic correctness of both lists is of course fully acknowledged *in this argument*. Correct or in-

correct, certain or doubtful, good or bad, as the case may chance to be, they are here esteemed to be correct, because we are to admit as true all that high-Churchmen teach or attempt to teach, say or pretend to say, by way of testimony, as to the historic truth of the fact of apostolic succession.

We are not now attempting to meet and rebut or undervalue their testimony. It is not said that they produce *no* testimony on the question in issue, of much weight or credibility, or of little weight or credibility. If they produce, or purport to produce, *any* testimony, or any witness, that claims or purports to speak on the question in issue, we have failed in this argument.

The reader has seen a list of the names of bishops, commencing with the Apostle John, and ending with Bishop White, of the United States; and we are to acknowledge the historic correctness of all the facts. These lists represent that these bishops succeeded each other in the sees of Rome, and of Lyons, until about the close of the sixth century, and after that in the see of Canterbury, in England. We then have a list of the successive bishops of Canterbury until the list transfers to the United States. And all this is presumed to be good history.

Well: has the reader seen any thing on the subject of *successive ordinations*, all this while? *Not one word!* Hold! that is a little too fast. He has seen one word on the subject of successive ordinations, and it shall be shown precisely what he has seen. The list claims—the first one does—that St. John ordained Polycarp, and it may be fairly presumed to claim that Polycarp ordained Pothinus, the first bishop in the see of Lyons. The list also claims that Augustin was ordained by Virgilius, the twenty-fourth bishop in the see of Arles. It also claims that in the year 1787 Bishop Moore, of Canterbury, ordained Bishop White, of the United States. This is all of every fact that is said or attempted to be said, proved

or attempted to be proved, in these lists on the subject of *ordinations*.

Is there one word said, or attempted to be said, implied or understood, by these lists on the subject of *ordinations* between Pothinus and Ætherius, in the see of Lyons, or between Augustin and Moore, in that of Canterbury, five hundred and ninety years in the one case, and eleven hundred years in the other?

Not one word!

It is proved by these lists—admitting them to be correct—that these bishops, whose names are here mentioned, succeeded each other in the order in which they stand, in the respective sees where they are placed, *in the office of bishop*. That may all be true. We are not inquiring or disputing about who held the office of bishop at certain times in certain sees, and who succeeded them in office. We are inquiring about a list of *successive ORDINATIONS*.

Lists of bishops who succeeded each other in *office* as successive *incumbents* is one thing, but a list of bishops who were *the ordainers of each other* is a totally different thing. These lists give or purport to give information on the former question, but not on the latter. But it is the latter question only that is before us for examination.

Is it pretended by any, or claimed or imagined by any, that the bishops whose names stand in these lists were *the ordainers of each other*? that successive *ordinations* came down through them?

Certainly not! This is not, cannot be pretended or claimed by any one acquainted with the history of the case. It is possible, it is admitted it is possible, that in many instances the successor *may have been* ordained by his predecessor. That is, it is as likely, if he was alive, that he was his ordainer, as any other bishop who chanced to be alive in the world at the time; and no more so. The circumstance of

his preceding him in office does not by any means increase the probability that he was his ordainer. But it greatly decreases the probability, from this consideration, that in every instance *the old bishop was dead before the new one came into office*; and the dead bishop could not ordain his successor.

The question before us is in regard to *successive ordinations*, and not in regard to *successive incumbency in office*.

Let us inquire of this list—anywhere, no matter where—say at No. 70. Becket is put down at No. 70. Now, who ordained Becket? The list tells us that Theobold preceded him in office as bishop of Canterbury. But that is not an answer to the question. It tells us, too, that William Corbell preceded Theobold; but all this gives no information on the subject of *ordinations*; and we are only inquiring about ordinations. Verus, Julius, Ptolemy, Vocius, are put down in the see of Lyons, as Nos. 6, 7, 8, and 9. But *who ordained them?* The list does not pretend to say. *Nor can, nor does*, any man pretend to say or to know.

These “LISTS,” therefore, furnish us no more information on the subject of a succession of ordinations in the Church—admitting their history to be correct, of course, and supposing them to teach correctly where they purport to teach at all—than they do about a succession of battles in the Jewish war, when Jerusalem was taken by the Romans, or of successive voyages round the world.

For what purpose these famous lists were made and thus paraded, is not our present inquiry; and if it were, most likely it would be a fruitless inquiry. Why they are printed in books that treat of apostolic succession is not known. Certain it is that they could scarcely be placed in a more inappropriate situation. If by possibility they were made out and put in these places for the purpose of deceiving the uninformed, there is but a single word that need be said, and that may as well be said in the language of another:

——“The bold impostor
Looks not more silly when the cheat’s found out.”

Now, is this view and this delineation of the character of these “lists” assented to, or is it objected to, on the part of high-Churchmen?

It is *assented to*. For the reason, perhaps, that it *cannot* be objected to, it is fully acquiesced in.

It chanced, not long since, that the writer was drawn into a debate on this subject with two distinguished high-Churchmen, George S. Yerger and William C. Smedes, Esqrs., editors of a high-Church paper in Mississippi. Mr. Yerger is one of the most distinguished lawyers in the United States. Mr. Smedes is one of the most distinguished lawyers in the South. They are both thoroughly read in high-Church principles. Mr. Yerger, as a bold and close and logical writer on this subject, is believed to have no superior among those whose writings have been published in this country or in England.

In the course of the debate the following proposition was made:

“I now propose to you, that if you will produce a list of names, which you will say is entitled to some reasonable historic credit, and which *purports to show* an unbroken succession of ordinations, from one ordained person to another, since the time of the apostles, I will give up the argument, knock under and retire.”—End of Apostolic Succession, unabridged, page 23.

Again: “If you will produce a list of bishops, showing an ‘unbroken succession of ordinations,’ I am done. I have never seen such a list. I do not believe it is in print. We have many lists of bishops, published by Bishop Green and others; not one of which, however, so far as I have seen, purports to be a list of *successive ordinations*. They are only lists of *incumbents in office*.

“I asked for a list of bishops who were ordained, not ‘*by their immediate predecessors,*’ in the same diocese, but by *anybody*. I asked, and still ask, for a consecutive list of bishops who were ordained *at all*, so as to show a succession of ordinations. Produce such a list, from any thing you will say is history, and I am done. I beg that this point may not be evaded. Do not offer me a list of bishops who *held office successively*, in lieu of a list who *were ordained successively*. Let this issue be met fairly, or let it be acknowledged that you have no list of *successive ordinations*. This is a vital point.”—See pages 34, 35.

We have the answer on page 44, as follows :

“As no one who has written on this subject has, to our knowledge, intimated that such a list as Mr. Abbey demands exists, we say it is an attempt to present a *false issue*, when he makes the demand, pronounces it a vital point, and insists that it shall not be evaded. He knew, we knew, every one familiar with the subject knows, that *no such list existed or could be produced.*”

The gentleman’s own italics are carefully preserved.

Again, page 117 : “The admission that there is no list of successive ordinations to the episcopal office, by which is meant, no list reaching from the present back to apostolic days, which shows what bishops ordained each bishop in the list, fills Mr. Abbey with wonder, and falls, he thinks, with crushing effect on the ears and hopes of high-Churchmen.” Page 118 : “It” (the succession of ordinations) “has nothing to do with lists of bishops.”

I have redeemed my pledge. The only testimony ever pretended to be adduced in support of *the fact* of successive ordinations is these celebrated lists. We examine these lists, and find that they do not relate to the question in issue. They only claim to relate to the question of successive incumbency in the office of bishop and archbishop in several sees.

But that question is entirely foreign to the one in hand. We call upon their champions for an explanation of these lists, and they give us no explanation at all, but frankly confess, "There is no list of ordinations." So the question ends.

It is remarkable indeed, it is marvellous, that these "lists of bishops" have been paraded all over England and the United States, and published here and there and everywhere, in high-Church controversies on this subject, as evidence of successive ordinations, when they do not, when properly understood, relate to the question in issue in the remotest manner. And it is strange, also, that they have so long passed current for testimony on the question. So far as I know, non-prelatical writers have heretofore met them by denying their historic correctness. But I see nothing to be gained by proving their historic incorrectness, because, true or untrue, they do not relate to the question in controversy. And, moreover, there are few historic questions a thousand or two thousand years old which may not be brought forward with some show of authenticity.

We leave this subject with these two simple concluding observations: The theory of apostolic succession is supported by nothing in the Scriptures, and only by the flimsiest drapery imaginable out of them; and the fact of an actual succession is supported, plainly and confessedly, by *nothing at all*.

PART FOUR.

Ecclesiastical Exclusiveness.

CHAPTER I.

CONSISTENCY OF DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES.

WHATEVER is true, either in theory or practice, must harmonize with the constitution and condition of mankind. That which is true in itself is congruous with every thing else that is true.

Christianity is true; but its *truth* is by no means superior to any other truth. It claims only to be plainly, simply, and rationally true in its theory and practice. It harmonizes with man's moral and mental make and mechanism precisely in the same way that other truths do. It exercises no control over the curious structure of man's mental frame. God has not, either in religion or in any thing else, disturbed, or in the least degree interfered with the CONSTITUTION OF MAN as it was first established.

The mind of man bears the same relation—ought to bear the same relation—to religion as to any other practical system. The *trueness* of religion does not by any means, in the least degree, tend to relieve the mind of man from any difficulties or embarrassments it is likely to meet with in philo-

sophic or scientific investigation. It does not assist man in understanding its philosophy, in unravelling and discerning its scientific phenomena, any more than the truth of any other system that is true leads or tends to such results.

We must not confound the *theory* of religion with its *experience*. We are of course now speaking of the former. The theory of religion resides in the intellect and expatiates in the judgment. The experience of religion is developed in the heart and roams in the feelings.

The philosophy of religion, its doctrines, its simplicities, its complexities, its plainness, its mysteries, its extended and varied scheme, its unity, its all, of phase and character, is presented to the mind of man with the same advantages and disadvantages of any other true practical system. It stands upon the common platform of simple, practical truth, and claims no higher position.

It is, then, as likely that men will differ in their judgment respecting religion, or respecting many things pertaining to religion, as in respect to any other practical system of science or philosophy. Men are as fallible when thinking and judging about religion as when thinking and judging about any thing else. They are as liable to err in judgment respecting religion—that is, respecting things pertaining to religion—as respecting any thing else that admits of difference of opinion.

Men are likewise as liable to prejudice and prepossession respecting religion as any thing else. These prejudices and prepossessions may grow out of various relations and circumstances. They may find their origin in national affinities, or affinities respecting language, or family, or other preferences or interests. Differences of civil government, or of systems of education, or political economy, may superinduce them.

And from a point of divergence, no matter what may have occasioned such divergence, such is the variety of mental structure, that it is impossible to foresee where the advocates of

different sentiments may find themselves, with respect to each other, after a while.

But all this while TRUTH is the only fundamental principle in all the world of mind and of morals. Error, the only competitor of truth, is at once the progenitor and the progeny of error, and can never become, or answer in the place of, truth. The farther it is pursued, the deeper and the more dangerous the error becomes, and the farther, and still farther, we find ourselves from the truth. *True* religion leads to life : *false* religion leads to death.

These philosophic axioms are, perhaps, objected to upon the ground that they forestall denominational differences, and interfere with the natural exercise of private judgment; or if they do not, they render salvation impracticable.

The argument is this :

If we are absolutely and unconditionally bound to find out and pursue the one *right way*, amidst a hundred conflicting opinions and sectarian views, then, who can be saved? Here, they say, is the Methodist: he tells you *this* is the path of true Christianity—these and those are the true doctrines. The Presbyterian says, No: these and those are the correct exposition of God's word, and compose the true plan of Christian life. And the Episcopalian says, No: these are the true doctrines. And the Baptist says *here*, and the New School man says *here*, and the Cumberland says *here*, etc. And they gravely ask us what a plain, honest inquirer after truth is to do amidst these conflicting sentiments. He is bound to find *the right way*, or be damned! Does God require every man to be a critical judge?

Thus the argument is, that before Christians can consistently ask other men to come and join them in the promotion of Christianity, they must themselves present a common platform of faith and practice. And until they do so, the objector asks, What is there for me to join? How do I know I

am joining *Christianity*, when all the sects in the world but one are opposed to the doctrines I espouse?

And thus the idea is, that, of course, all denominations but one are wrong, for two antagonists cannot both be right.

And the conclusion from this argument is, on the one hand, with the man of the world, that, as a consistent man, he will not join any sect until they first settle all these difficulties, and thus show to men *what* the Christianity is into which they invite others. And the bigoted sectarian cries out that he has imbibed a spark of infallibility, or has drunk at a fountain of some kind that will answer him the same end—that *he* is *right*, and of course everybody else wrong.

The first of these arguments, as used by the men of the world, we will dispose of in this chapter; the latter, as used by the narrow-minded sectary, will be reserved for more leisure.

The man of the world contends that Christians cannot consistently invite others to come and join them, until they first agree among themselves upon a common platform of faith and practice—until they settle all differences among themselves. He says that under these circumstances of sectarian division and difference of creed, he could at best but join a *party*, but it is a hundred chances to one he is not embracing true and proper *Christianity*. And so he cannot join either party until he can have some reasonable assurance that, in so doing, he is espousing Christianity with a proper creed. And so he is consistent in staying away.

This argument can be tested by comparing it with others of a like kind. And in this way we can ascertain with unerring certainty whether it is or is not put forth in good faith. For if these are truly the man's principles, then he acts upon them in all analogous cases.

Let us look at the argument in its application to EDUCATION. Here are the advocates and promoters of education;

and they propose to others to come and join them in educating the youth of the world. I propose to join in this enterprise ; but before I do so, I look at those already engaged in it, and find that they disagree greatly among themselves. One is in favor of this system, and another of that. One says a child should be put to school at three years old ; another says, No, at five ; and another says, No, at ten. One is in favor of using these and those text-books ; and another says, No, these and those are the only proper ones. One party is in favor of public schools supported by a common fund. And other parties oppose this system, and espouse some one of half a dozen other different kinds.

So, to be consistent, I stand aloof from the whole. I can educate neither myself nor my child until the advocates of education agree among themselves upon a common platform of faith and practice. This is the argument.

Or, look at CIVIL GOVERNMENT. Here are the advocates and promoters of civil government ; and I propose to join them, and advocate and practice civil government too. But here I meet the same difficulty. This party is in favor of monarchy, and this advocates aristocracy, and this republicanism, with a dozen or twenty modifications to each. A hundred sects, a hundred parties, all disagreeing among themselves.

And so, of course, to be consistent, I can neither *do* nor *be* any thing with regard to government, until all the advocates of civil government agree among themselves, settle these differences, and present a common faith and practice. This is the argument.

And the advocates of INDUSTRY are in the same awkward and unphilosophic condition. One espouses this calling, and another that. They are cut up into a hundred sects and parties.

AGRICULTURISTS also are split up into numberless divisions. Few of them agree as to the proper time, the proper

weather, and the proper circumstances, in which to plough, to plant, to hoe, and to harvest, in all the details of these several branches.

And if we go to the SCIENCES—except those which are called positive sciences, which do not admit, in the nature of the case, of differences of opinion—we fare no better. PHYSICIANS are divided into parties. One says, in a given case, give calomel; another says, No, calomel will kill now: give an emetic. A third says, No, give cold water. A fourth advocates the lancet; a fifth, homœopathy; a sixth, a tenth, a hundredth, this, that, and the other.

And our philosophic man can never, in any case, do any thing until they all agree!

Who differ with each other, in their respective vocations, more than lawyers, or politicians, or legislators, or merchants, or navigators, or military commanders, or the incumbents of the throne, or the kitchen, or the knights of the senate, or the shoe-shop?

In what theoretic and practical system in human life do men agree in belief and action? And what is the philosophic condition of our consistent man, who *stands still* in all these various departments until other men harmonize?

He cannot wear clothes, because all men do not dress alike. He cannot eat his dinner, because all do not choose the same dishes. He cannot live, because there is such a diversity of sentiment as to the best mode of living!

The plain, simple truth is, that such is the constitution of man,—I need not be inquired of why it is so, for I do not know,—I was not consulted in the matter; but the truth is, that such is, in fact, the character of men's constitution, that in their social relation they never harmonize on the details of any practical system. The mind, once set agoing, is constantly on the stretch after improvement; after advantage; after a better way to accomplish the same end. When the

mind of man becomes quiescent, then there will be no more differences of opinion among men, either in relation to the matters of this world or the next; and then Mr. Volney's argument on this point will have some sense in it, and his memory may be rescued from an oblivious lunacy.

But after all, notwithstanding men disagree so much in matters of detail, in every practical system, yet it is generally only in matters of detail that they disagree. In regard to matters which they account fundamental in any system, men generally agree tolerably well. In truth, in matters which are really fundamental they rarely disagree.

No advocate of education dispenses with books, teachers, or industry on the part of the pupil. No political economist dispenses with legislation, judicature, or the execution of laws. No farmer repudiates fencing and ploughing, or plants corn under the snows of December.

And in relation to the differences among Christians with regard to Christianity, this may be said with emphasis, that there is this day *less* of difference of belief and practice among Christians with regard to Christianity than is found among any other class of persons in the world with regard to the details of belief and practice in their several spheres of operation: so that however obnoxious Christianity may be to Mr. Volney, or to any other beholder, because of its division into sects, denominations, and parties, the whole world beside is more obnoxious to the same beholder because of the very same objection.

Nor does this view make the slightest compromise with error. We have already said that error is always necessarily in immediate antagonism with truth. It is only error, and that continually. The farther it is pursued—any kind of error—the deeper and the deeper it leads its votary into worse and worse errors. This is the natural character and tendency of error, either in religion or in any thing else.

But it is not every poison that kills outright at the first draft. Ninety-nine errors are only a disadvantage—a hindrance—a clog—a drawback; and they operate with greater or less force, and more or less rapidly in their work of mischief. The hundredth one only, perhaps, it is that kills with direct and unerring certainty. Perhaps it is only one time in a hundred that the physician *kills* his own patient, that the navigator *sinks* his own vessel, or that the Christian *loses* his own soul. Of course in that erroneous act of *killing*, no matter how the error came about, the physician was not truly a *physician*, though generally in other acts he may have been. Nor in *the act* which resulted in the sinking of the vessel was the navigator truly a navigator, whatever may have been his general character. And just so of the Christian. However Christian he may have been generally, or at times, in that act, or those acts, either of faith or practice, which resulted in his ruin, he was not a Christian.

Denominational differences, then, result from the nature of man's constitution, and from the nature of a practical system—a system of belief and practice.

The division of the Church into denominations results from an honest entertainment and avowal of different sentiments which are sure to arise among men who think. Differences of belief which classify men into denominations are those which arise upon points of supposed importance. But in reality, if men were more carefully and particularly classified according to their several differences of belief, in all cases we would find ten or twenty times the number of denominations which the Church appears to have. But men do not formally divide into parties except on points which are supposed to be of considerable comparative importance.

The same laws, therefore, which govern this question out of the Church, as might naturally be expected, are found to govern it in the Church.

CHAPTER II.

POSITION OF POPERY.

ACCORDING to Popery, there can be no religious liberty. The Pope is infallible, and his *dictum* is the imperative law of God. Neither can there be any civil liberty, for infallibility cannot be restricted to faith and practice respecting religion merely, for that would not be infallibility. Religion and civil government are necessarily united. The ecclesiastical magistrate must, *ex officio*, be the civil magistrate, because an infallible religious government must necessarily be a perfect civil government; and to oppose his rule in the one case is as sinful as to oppose him in the other.

Romanism is consistent in claiming infallibility for the Pope; because, if the line of Popes compose the channel of transmission through which Christ's authority descends from him to men in successive ages, it must be an infallible channel. It would be absurd to say that Christ's authority, which is in itself infallibly true, and is, therefore, binding absolutely upon every man's conscience, has descended to us through a fallible channel. The authority, if it be binding because divine, must be delivered to us through a divine, that is, an infallible channel. And so they say the Pope, being infallible, and having received authority from Christ, is capable of giving infallible instructions, and of uttering infallible authority to men.

The morning of the sixteenth century was a morning of continuous clouds, of overcast sky, and the not unfrequent mutterings of the thunder of discontent, of priestly arrogance, humble subjection, and iron rule. Every thing is fallible but the Pope and his ministers, and, therefore, the Pope rules and must rule every thing.

There was no Church but the Pope's Church; there was no Christianity but the Pope's Christianity; there was no Christian ministry but the Pope's Christian ministry; there was no truth that the Pope did not sanction, because he was at once the depositary and administrator of truth; that is to say, he was the vicegerent of Christ.

There was, of course, no place here to wedge in an observation respecting ecclesiastical exclusiveness, because Popery was the standard. Every thing outside of the Pope was, for that reason, outside of Christianity. And the enclosures of Popery, that is, the enclosures of Christianity, were wherever the Pope, from time to time, chose to *say* they were.

Many persons erroneously consider the errors of Popery to consist in her worship of saints, her veneration of images, her transubstantiation, her idolatrous mass, her trade in indulgences, her elevation of tradition over the Scriptures, her auricular confession, etc., etc. But these are only the fruits of her one great error—the claim to universal primacy; not the primacy of the Pope particularly, but the primacy or supremacy of the Church. Church exclusiveness leads to many foolish and hurtful lusts, as we shall see hereafter.

The great error of Popery is, that she claims something in her bosom, some right, or privilege, or dignity, or power, or superiority, which inures to her, or inheres in her in some way other than by the direct impartation of the Scriptures.

At the Reformation there was a *reformation* of the Church; that is, there was a return from an ecclesiasticism to the Bible. The Reformation was not merely a reform in external

Christian manners—a lopping off of certain ecclesiastical indecencies, falsehoods, and corruptions, and a commencement on the part of the Reformers of a purer worship. If this had been all, the Reformation would have been forgotten years ago. A mere reform in external manners would, in all likelihood, have passed away with the Reformers themselves, if indeed it had not preceded them. The Reformation was a return from priestcraft to the Bible—a repudiation of the ecclesiastical authority of *men*, and a taking up of the Bible as the only binding law. The Reformation protested that the name of *Rome* on a man's forehead did not make a man a Christian; but that Christianity consisted in a personal attachment to Jesus Christ. The Reformation declared that Divine association, and not ecclesiastical association, made a man a Christian.

Popery is still where she was. Her corruptions and manners may be dark, darker, very dark, or quite black: it matters but little. She is Popery so long as she claims and maintains a human religion, or a religion outside of the Bible.

Many providential circumstances have tended to divide the Christian Church into different denominations. This has been brought about partly by the interference of civil government, partly by intolerance and ecclesiastical oppression, and partly by differences of belief on doctrinal questions.

But Popery is a stereotyped falsehood, and in its very nature forbids an inquiry into its claims. In the nature of the case it cannot be reformed, because it cannot be examined or looked into with the view of ascertaining whether it is or is not an error. Romanism is not a *creed*; it is not a scheme or system of religion which men *believe*. Its adherents are not its adherents because they *think* it comes nearest to, or is most consonant with, Christian truth. To *believe*, or to *think*, implies the exercise of the judgment in the choice between hypotheses. And Rome repudiates nothing more stoutly than

the exercise, in much or in little, of the judgment, in matters pertaining to religion. So that it is a great mistake to suppose that Romanists differ with Christians in opinion about religion. They can, in the nature of the case, have no *opinion* about religion; for an opinion questions and decides with regard to the infallibility of the Pope; and this *questioning* and *deciding* is the exercise of men's judgment, which is the rankest of all anti-Popery.

Romanism, according to its most fundamental principle, in the very nature of its vitality, performs without thinking, and adheres without choice.

Papists cannot, therefore, be said to be exclusive, in the sense in which this term is applied to Christians. They are exclusive of unavoidable necessity: they could not be otherwise and remain Papists. Christians are exclusive—when they are so at all—from choice. They are Christians from choice, and they believe what they believe as the result of the free exercise of judgment.

If Papists were all really and truly Papists, or Roman Catholics, as they are sometimes very improperly called, they would be disposed of in a very few words in this chapter. Nothing is more opposed to Christianity than true, genuine Popery. It not only subverts every Christian principle, but assumes, itself, to *be* Christianity. Romanism is purely, wholly, and essentially priestcraft. But there are many persons in this country, and some elsewhere, who have caught a little of the spirit of civil and religious liberty, and who are, therefore, if religious, religious in spite of their nominal religious principles. Men who *think* about religion, or in regard to it, are not true Papists. Men who serve servilely, according to the commands of priests, are Papists, whether they are ostensibly classed with them or no.

All true and genuine priestcraft is true and genuine Popery,

whether it has or has not an ostensible connection with Roman Catholicism.

The true line, therefore, between Popery and Christianity is this: the one is religious exclusiveness, *necessarily*, innate, and primary, without the process of thinking, or the liberty of thinking, in order to become so—Christianity implies an independent process of thinking in order to become a Christian.

All exclusiveness or intolerance is anti-Christian; but there is a difference between that which is the result of thinking, and therefore amounts to belief, and that which arises from the mere naked *dictum* of priests.

We have seen that men disagree in the details of all practical systems; but they disagree only as the result of the exercise of their judgment. Not so with Popery: Papists adhere without belief.

The constitution of the human mind, which was made before religion was, is such that men do not think alike on any subject, except in matters which are primary and fundamental.

The advocates of civil government, as we have seen, differ on a thousand points of policy. Some are monarchists, some are aristocrats, some are republicans. And among any class, say republicans, what is more common than differences of opinion on many important points? Yet all, in the one case, are in favor of civil government: all, in the other case, are in favor of republican government.

And just so with the advocates of industry. All follow the same fundamental principles, yet they are divided into sects and parties. One is a farmer, one a tradesman, one a navigator, and one an artist. Agriculturists differ among themselves with regard to a thousand matters of detail—important matters, too—yet no one violates the primary principles.

It must be supposed, then, that if, in matters of religion,

men are left free to the exercise of individual judgment, there will be something like the same degree of difference of sentiment in religion, as in other subjects of human thought and practice. If it were not so, the question of religion would form a singular exception, in thought and opinion, in the human constitution.

And what is more natural than that persons whose belief runs in these and those channels, should affiliate in the use and exercise of an exclusive ecclesiastical jurisdiction? It could scarcely be otherwise. Oneness in jurisdiction and external government would by no means argue a catholicity in faith and doctrine; for true catholicity can only be where there is the largest freedom of opinion and liberty of belief.

To say, then, that the position of Romanism and the reformation of the Church, gave rise to a wider range of denominational Christianity, is only to say that it gave rise to the natural results of religious freedom.

The *principles* of Christianity were as perfectly known and as perfectly taught in the early ages of the Church as they ever can be; and yet there are many matters of deduction, conclusion, and inference, making up the philosophy of religion, in regard to which the world at the present day—the wisest portions of it—may be said to be far from a state of consummate sapience.

What the age or state of the world will be, when all questions of religious belief shall be *settled*—when all the primary truths of Christianity shall be run out to their ultimate conclusions, and a settled policy shall grace a universal harmony—it is impossible to tell. One thing is very certain, however: before that time comes the world will undergo many very great changes in moral and intellectual progress.

The thing which answers in the place of belief in Romanism is regulated by priests and popes—prepared to hand for indi-

vidual use ; and hence its sameness. Among Protestants men *believe* what they *think* is true.

This is believed to be the true position of Popery with regard to denominational Christianity. It has philosophically no part or lot in the matter, because philosophically it has no part or lot in Christianity.

CHAPTER III.

CREEDS.

FOR the lack of a tribunal of acknowledged jurisdiction, it will, perhaps, never be decided whether Pope Leo X. excommunicated Luther, or whether Luther excommunicated Pope Leo X. Excommunication is a very doubtful power. Its functions may be real, or they may be entirely illusory. There are at this time in the United States about eleven or twelve gentlemen who claim the prerogative of excommunication, and who excommunicate, or think they excommunicate, all the Christians, nearly three millions in number, in the United States, except the members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, one of the very smallest denominations in the country. But the excommunicating power of these few high-Church bishops, nearly half the bishops of that Church, is regarded by many as of very doubtful tenure.

To *say*, or to *think*, that certain Christians are excommunicated, does not always put them beyond the pale of Christ's true Church.

In 1733, the vote of one man, though he claimed not to be a pope, but only a moderator, expelled from the Established Church of Scotland, Mr. Erskine, and his associate "seceders." But the excommunicated clergymen replied: "No, brethren, we and our respective flocks are not expelled from the Church; we are only a coördinate branch with yourselves of a common

Christianity." And Christendom, with its Bible, has sanctioned their decision, rather than that of the casting vote of expulsion given by the moderator of that highly respectable Church.

Excommunication, whether written or spoken, official or social, is a thing better understood in these days than in the past, when it was chiefly or wholly in the keeping of popes, and kings, and parliaments. The Bible is in the hands of the people, and it teaches that excommunication can only result from a proper adjudication upon charges of *unbelief* or *immorality*.

A man who *believes in Christ*, and evidences his faith by a proper profession and blameless walk among men, has a *right* to a place in the Church of Christ, by the law of Christ, which no man may repeal or despise.

The disadvantages of denominationalism result only from the prejudices of misguided zealots. They excommunicate each other, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

The advantages of denominational Christianity might, it would seem, be supposed to be as great as similar differences of sentiment upon other subjects. It would be best in but few instances in practical life for men to think and act precisely alike. The diversity of mind, in its structure and development, corresponds to the diversity of life and circumstance and condition around us.

A difference of creed does not argue a difference of religion, nor prove that the adherents to either are fundamentally wrong.

Neither do creeds, as is argued by some, tend to cripple the operations of the mind, or stultify thought, or fetter genius. Creeds do not require men to think so and so, according to their prescriptions. This, in the very nature of the case, cannot be done. That which requires men to

think, or induces them to do so, requires them to exercise their free judgment, and govern themselves accordingly.

The truth in relation to religion should be left as free as that which relates to astronomy or geology. To fetter and hamper the mind, and chain it to a set of rules and pre-arranged dogmas respecting religion, is as unphilosophic as it would be to do the same thing in relation to astronomy or geology. Let the mind be free. To chain it is to kill it.

But are creeds chains and fetters upon the mind? They are so regarded only by those whose own minds are chained and fettered by sectarian prejudice. All man-made religion, either for home or general use, will not pay for the paper.

What is a creed? It is a synoptic explication which a man gives to certain passages of Scripture. If it be written, then it is a written creed. If not, then it is an unwritten creed. Every man who reads the Bible to understand it, except a Papist, has, necessarily, a creed. The manner in which he *understands* these passages, by the free, untrammelled exercise of his judgment, is his creed. If two of us understand these passages alike, then, very well, we have the same creed. If not, then we differ.

But about what do we differ? Do we differ upon the question whether Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world? whether belief in Christ is necessary to salvation? whether the Bible is the word of God? whether true religion enjoins repentance, and prayer, and holy living? No: we do not differ about any of these things. Then it is in a very modified sense that it can be said we differ about *religion*.

A late writer against the use of creeds—that is, against all creeds but *his own*—writes as follows:

“The idea of supporting truth by authority is preposterous and absurd. It implies a misconception of its nature, and of the correlative laws of the human mind. Authority can give to truth no valuable support. Its effect is only to embarrass

and hinder its progress. It would not be less preposterous to teach mathematics, chemistry, and philosophy by authority, than religion. Mathematics, chemistry, and philosophy, if taught at all, must be taught by their essential evidences: so must religion, both natural and revealed."

All of which is very correct; but it is a little singular that the same writer, in the same volume, gives us four hundred pages of his creed, in which he well-nigh, if not quite, communicates the whole of Christendom who do not subscribe to his views of Congregational Church government.

Those who cry the loudest against creeds, are not unfrequently the most intolerant in the use of them. In truth, a rule against creeds is, in the very nature of the case, intolerant. It is perhaps the most oppressive creed found among Christians. It forbids them to think, and say what they think. They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Plain Bible Christians, no matter what may be their creed, or to what denomination they may belong, extend the same toleration to others which they expect and claim for themselves.

All men are bound, by the imperative law of God, to live and die in the Church of Christ; but all men are not bound—could not be bound—to think alike in all things.

A Bible Christian who is not troubled with bigotry, is not so peremptorily in favor of even his own creed, as to place it above and in antagonism with all others, under all circumstances. He is in favor of his own creed, practically, because he believes that *he* could be a better Christian, enjoy religion with more composure and satisfaction, and be more useful in a Church with that creed, than in another; but he will advise a young convert, after examining his circumstances, education, family, religious opportunities, etc.; to attach himself to a Church with a creed differing from his own. He will advise this person to be an Episcopalian, that one to be a Baptist,

the other to be a Presbyterian, a Methodist, etc. All other things being equal, he advises in favor of his own Church.

Any thing short of this is bigotry in theory, and intolerant exclusiveness in practice.

Creeds are opinions, worn and used as other opinions are. They are neither fetters to *bind* men, nor marks which distinguish men as having an exclusive right to live. A Christian with a creed differing from our own, bears the same relation to us which subsists between two fellow-laborers who work somewhat differently, or with implements somewhat different. In most of the affairs of this world, the same end may be accomplished by different means. There is one mode, however, which, in given circumstances, is always preferable. The machine modified so as to work with least friction, is best; but this does not argue that the man who works to some disadvantage, as we think, must be beheaded.

But after all, a remark must be by no means omitted, for its consideration is important. This is it: The differences and disagreements which appear to subsist among Christians of different denominations, are nine-tenths seeming or imaginary, and one-tenth real. Perhaps, in truth, the disproportion is oftentimes much greater than this.

These disagreements, if looked at upon the surface, as they are mostly by most men, seem to cause quite a ripple; but if examined into a little deeper, with care and candor, the most of the difficulty is most likely to disappear. There are sectarian dialects, modes and habits of expression, favorite phrases and set words, very generally made use of in these controversies, which make up a very large portion of their substance. The natural bias of education, party attachments, and pride of opinion, have also much to do in the matter. Let all these things be fairly and carefully subtracted, and the real difference of sentiment remaining will be found to be but small.

For instance, the advocate of election and decrees believes

that any particular, specially designated man, may be saved if he will; and how much more does his opponent, of free grace, require?

The advocate of final perseverance admits that, in the case of any particular, specially designated man, honest and faithful striving is an indispensable condition of salvation.

Hannah More, or somebody else, tells a story of two knights who were about to fight a duel upon a dispute as to the color of a shield which hung in the distance; one affirming that it was silver, and the other that it was gold, and both relying upon the testimony of their own eyes. A friend stepped up and requested them to change places, which they did; and immediately discovered that both were right. It was one side silver, and the other gold.

CHAPTER IV.

PERSECUTION.

ALL men readily agree that religious "PERSECUTION" is utterly unchristian, and abhorrent to all correct feeling and principle. Every living man cries out against it. None are more opposed to it than the most violent persecutors that ever lived. The very sword, as it reeks with the blood of its victim, cries out against the impiety and impolicy of persecution. The crackling fagots of the vilest fanaticism that fury ever fanned into flame, mingle with the groans and prayers of dying saints their anathemas against the wickedness and intolerance of persecution.

None, at this day, speak or write more in opposition to persecution than Romish priests, and Romish popes, and Romish fanatics; and yet, does not the whole broad face of the earth convert itself into a mouth for the universe, and testify that persecution is practically a leading religious tenet of Romanism? At the same time that persecuting Rome reels and gloats in hellish revelry around the stake and the scaffold of the "heretic," she mingles her pious sympathies for the "unfortunate" subjects of her piety, with her livelier devotions at the shrine of those martyrs of olden time, whose cause she espouses and whose death she worships.

Persecution is a strange vixen. None bawl so loud or so furious against persecution as she. None fear it, or dread it, or abhor it so much.

But *what* is persecution? and how do we discriminate between *persecution*, and *resistance against* persecution? Now, Rome never persecutes anybody. No, no; no, no; not she. Innocent creature, she only, when compelled to, *resists* persecution against herself, when assaulted with it on the part of others!

But although Rome may chance, at the present time, to be the high-priest of persecution, there are, out of Rome, not a few low priests of the same profession, quite as innocent, and forbearing, and pious as she; and who would be quite as readily shocked, whose modesty would be quite as readily outraged, at the appearance of a truant thought which would seem to suppose *them* guilty of the vile crime of persecution. For what could more likely so shock the world as to cause it to turn backward upon its axis, than the escape of a suggestion that these wonderfully innocent and forbearing *subjects* of persecution and intolerance, should themselves be thought capable of the awful crime they have so peremptorily eschewed, and so long and so piously resisted?

Let us just step into the vestibule of Rome a moment, and be almost melted down with her piety, long-suffering, and consideration. All is the most profound and the most pious devotion. Religion is her daily bread. She cannot breathe freely without a cross, or something like it, constantly in view. She bemoans and deplures the sins and the waywardness of the "heretic" world around her, with a devotion which puts disinterestedness to the blush, and would make philanthropy hie away for very shame.

The cause of her pious weepings and distress is the heretic condition of this abominably heretic world, and her perplexity and uneasiness are owing to the difficulties she sees in the conversion of the world to THE CHURCH.

Of course, there is no salvation out of THE CHURCH—out of the mass—out of the confessional—out of the priests—out

of the anointings. The salvation of the world is committed to *them*, and the world *must* be saved. They would not persecute men—no, not for the world; but then men must be set right in regard to religion: they must be saved. And if one set of measures will not do, why, others must be resorted to. They do not punish them willingly, by any means, or for the sake of the punishment; but to save them: for the sake of their souls. Surely a man's soul is of more value than a part or all of his flesh. They are not persecuting the man, by any means; they are only getting hold of his flesh, or his character, or his property, or whatever they can get hold of most securely to lead him to God, and religion, and safety. Men *must* be saved.

And then, again, men not only neglect their own souls by living out of *the Church*, and away from the truth, but the very neglect of the Church, and her ordinances, and her whole paraphernalia of piety and religion, is itself an evil that must be abated in some way. For that neglect gives a sort of license to others, and they to others, and so on; and so everybody will neglect the Church, and consequently their souls; and consequently the whole world will be lost.

But this is not the one thousandth part of the evil. The greatest of all conceivable, and the most damnable of all damnable evils that the surface of the earth is capable of supporting, is, that men not only *neglect* the Church and the truth, and run away after Christ, or what they call religion, and get other men to go with them, but they undertake to believe, and get others to believe, things CONTRARY to the teachings of our true, and immaculate, and *infallible* CHURCH.

In sober truth, persecution is by no means confined to Romanists or to bygone days. It is in a thrifty, growing condition here amongst us every day. It is not wielded by the arm of civil authority here in our own country, nor is it

carried to the extent of civil disfranchisement, confiscation, rack, fagot, or sword.

Many persons fancy themselves opposed to religious persecution, when they are only opposed to some particular features or phases in the system. But the only rational opposition to it, most assuredly, must lie against *the principle* itself.

Religious toleration does not oppose persecution *because* the adverse party has or has not imbibed this or that true or erroneous religious doctrine, or set of doctrines. If a man may be persecuted in case his religious doctrines be wrong, then who may not be persecuted? and who is to be the judge of right or wrong doctrines?

Neither is persecution to be objected to upon the ground that the civil authority has no *right* to interfere in religious matters. Perhaps it has not, or it may have a right to interfere only to a certain extent; but what has that to do with the principle of persecution? Is the doctrine, then, that *civil* persecution is wrong, but that *social* persecution is right? or that *ecclesiastical* persecution may be properly inflicted?

And it is equally unphilosophic and erroneous to object to persecution upon the ground that it is inflicted with *severity*. Persecution is not wrong because it is cruel. It is cruel, if cruel at all, because it is wrong. The degree with which religious punishment is inflicted is not a proper subject of animadversion. The only question of note is in regard to the *principle* itself.

Neither is persecution to be objected to upon the ground that it is *revengeful* or *malicious* in its character. For it is not necessarily so. And if it were, then the objection would lie, not against the thing itself, but against the motives which lead to its practice. In truth, it cannot be said that revenge or malice are usually the motives or feelings which kindle the fires of persecution.

The wildest and bloodiest frenzy with which Rome was ever crazed, in her most beastly ecclesiastical drunkenness, in fastening the stake, or in wielding the rack or the axe, was not the result of malice or revenge against the unfortunate victims of her insanity. It is not at all clear that in these hellish scenes of blood and death, her protestations that she was acting with a view to the good of mankind in a religious sense were hypocritical. In many instances those engaged in these scenes *could* have had no bitter feelings of personal dislike against their tortured victims. They acted from a foolish and insane notion of religious obligation.

They took up a notion, first that heretics *ought* to be punished to death, *because they ought*; and, secondly, that the propagation of heretical errors must be prevented, by mild means if possible, but it *must be done*.

It is a great error also to suppose that that persecution is worst, most dangerous to religion, to the peace of society, and is the most severely to be reprehended, which inflicts the severest punishments. This is a very popular error, and a very great one. On the contrary, it is doubted very much whether those systems of persecution are not the worst, the most dangerous, and the most to be reprehended, which inflict no civil disability or physical punishment at all. At least, so far as *society* is concerned, and it may be regarded irrespective of *religion*, it is believed that that system of persecution is most tolerable where the inquisition holds an unrestrained sovereignty, with no ministers but the stake, the rack, and the scaffold. Where this is the case, and where there is *no escape* from the inquisition's *utmost fury* and most *summary vengeance*, there is perhaps a less amount of persecution than where it is carried on in a milder form. Because, under circumstances of such peremptory and savage rigor, there is found but little for the inquisition to do.

Is there more—I mean a greater *quantity*—of persecution

now in Italy than in the United States? I doubt it. As to numbers, there is almost no comparison. Ten thousand persons are persecuted in this country, for one in Italy. In truth, there is not much of it in the latter country; and if the laws were, if possible, ten-fold more rigorous there than they are, there would scarcely be a case once in a twelve-month.

It is, perhaps, possible for the spirit of persecution to be carried to such an extent that the sceptre of intolerance will meet not the slightest resistance. It can, after a time, work its work, and then sit down in unquestioned sovereignty; and men will no more dream of *thinking* about religion, than about any other kind of rebellion in sight of or on the scaffold.

Of course, under such circumstances, the ordinary means which are used for the elevation of the human mind, and the expansion of the human intellect, must be, and necessarily are, under the ban of proscription. For, if men are permitted to read, and education to rise an inch above the surface of the ground, a most powerful competitor is let loose against the inquisition.

It is by no means true that persecution has failed to answer its purposes, and accomplish its ends. It is a philosophic and well-arranged system. Wherever it has been set a going upon its own native principles, it has accomplished its legitimate ends, in a greater or less degree, in proportion as it has wielded, or has failed to wield, its own instruments with sufficient external assistance.

It has almost perfectly accomplished its purposes in Spain and Italy; and if it has not quite done so, it is not the fault of the genius and spirit of persecution, but because of the inadequacy of the means employed. And the same thing may be seen, on a smaller scale, in a great many little Spains and Italies in our own country.

Let ecclesiastical exclusiveness in any sect, in any corner or neighborhood, become dominant, and an unceasing torrent of excommunication will soon make its mark upon the community around.

It of course works to disadvantage as the Bible and the printing-press come in its way; but still it may accomplish something.

And although the exclusive party may not be dominant—nay, it may be greatly in the minority—still it can, in many ways of working, accomplish something. It can repress religious *thinking*: it can propagate illiberality: it can foster and encourage exclusiveness: it can shame the timid into submission: it can beget ecclesiastical pride: it can encourage proscription: license arrogance, and pamper folly, in at least a few instances. In a thousand different languages it can cry out, “Our Church is *THE Church*: all else is heresy;” and by the multiplicity of its declarations, the sanctimoniousness of its tone, the whinings of its sentimentalism, and the *cut of its jib*, it can accomplish *something*, though it may be but little, for its own dear natural father, the blustering hell-hound of Romish priestcraft and folly.

All ecclesiastical *racks*—whether made of bars and ropes and saws, or of stakes and fagots, or red strait-jackets, or pictured flames upon the garments, or high-Church newspapers, or sermons of wholesale excommunication, or neighborhood clubs of bigotry, or “We-are-the-Church” intolerance, or any other sort or kind of Church exclusiveness—are the natural children of the red prince inquisitorial in his illicit commerce with the brawling bad woman of Rome.

There is no mingling of blood and of races here. He who persecutes for religion’s sake—either with the bull of Innocent, or Pius VII.; the royal signature of Frederick II.; the liberty of American freedom; the stifled press of pro-

scription; the clerical arrogance of Tetzels, Puseys, Hooks, or their transatlantic friends of our own city churches—they are all persecutors, kith and kin: they are the children of the same father and mother who live in Italy. They may persecute about Peter or the pope; about apostolic succession or baptismal succession; because of too much water or too little; the *cause* may be found here or there—they are, really and truly, officers of the inquisition.

There is an essential difference between persecution and mere ecclesiastical contention and illiberality. The latter, to a greater or less extent, is censurable; it is always blameworthy; but it does not amount to persecution when the ecclesiastical validity of an opponent is acknowledged. Persecution may be mutual: that is, two persecutors may persecute each other.

There is a kind of *strife* which always necessarily subsists between Churches. So long as this is confined to a holy emulation, it is praiseworthy: when it rises to wrangling or contention, it is reprehensible: when it advances to the annulling of each other's Churches, or of excommunication, it is persecution, and can only be despised and pitied by all good men.

To all this, it is replied by some ecclesiastical exclusives, "What can we do? We do not exclude Christians and Churches because we *wish* to do so, but because we are *obliged* to. If Christians and Churches have not a legal origination, a legal ministry, and a valid form of government, what can we do? They exclude themselves, and we are obliged also to exclude them."

This reasoning would be utterly unworthy of notice, were it not for the fact that it has some respectable names attached to it. It must, therefore, empty and fallacious as it is, be displaced by argument. Remember, the objection does not

lie against the Christianity of the Christians composing these Churches, but against the organization, or the legal form of the organization of these Christians into Churches.

The argument is fallacious for the reason that those who make it would repudiate it in analogous cases. The same arguments directed against civil governments will prove that there is not a valid civil government on earth, and that the whole world is in anarchy. Directed against the courts of the country, it will prove that there is not a civil tribunal on earth with legal judicial powers. Applied to legislatures, it proves that there is not a law-making body on earth with legal powers to legislate. Nor is there an executive officer in the country, from the President of the United States to the sheriff of a county, who has legal authority to execute a law.

Let us test either of these cases by the rule.

Here is a man who claims to be a judge of a circuit court. He has just passed sentence on a criminal convicted of murder, and I tell him that he himself is a murderer, for none but a *legal* judge has authority to pass such a sentence. In reply, he shows me the law of his State, which prescribes how the judges shall be appointed and commissioned by the governor, etc.; all of which things have been complied with in his case. But I reply that that governor was not a governor, nor that pretended legislature a legislature; for the people under whose franchise they claim their appointment had no right to elect them to these offices. He points me to the constitution of the State, but I ask for the right of these particular people to form such a constitution; and he points me to the organization of the government after the Revolutionary war. But here I find the same objection. What right had these people to revolutionize the British Colonies? He replies that Great Britain herself acknowledged the independence of the United States. But I ask, what right had Great Britain

to legalize such an arrangement? She herself is a spurious government. What right had William to conquer the country? What right had Cæsar to invade it? And so, because this judge cannot trace his governmental authority back to Adam, he cannot substantiate his legal authority. And if we could go to Adam, it is questionable whether he had authority over any land out of Paradise, or even in that after he was driven out of it, and no man can now prove where Paradise was. So there is no legal authority now on the earth.

This is the argument. And it is just as good in the one case as in the other.

But the rule of common sense is, that legal *men* who have a government in fact have a legal government.

And so of Christians. Legal Christians who have a Church in fact have necessarily a legal Church. But they cannot be legal Christians if, collectively or individually, they transgress the Scriptures.

The rule goes even farther than this. A government or compact founded in fraud becomes legal to all intents and purposes when the fraud cannot be rectified.

The title to the ground where I now sit and write is founded in fraud. It is well known that the Legislature of Georgia, when Mississippi formed a part of that State, sold a large territory here to a New England land company—perhaps it was called the Massachusetts Company—by notorious, proved, and undenied fraud. Congress, however, was compelled to purchase the country from the fraudulent purchasers, or those who held under them, and there the fraud will remain as long as the country carries its history down the annals of time.

We might go a step farther and inquire, Where is the land the title to which is not founded in legal fraud?

An irregularity, so far as men are concerned, either in Church or state, or any other human affairs, becomes regular, or is treated by all men as though it were regular, when the irregu-

larity or illegality is of such a nature that it cannot be rectified. The negative of this principle would throw society, in all its departments, into irremediable jargon and confusion.

Persecution requires impossibilities. It supposes that which is not supposable. It assumes that which cannot be true. It demands of men a constitution, mental and moral, other than a human constitution.

Persecution is the civil, social, or ecclesiastical excommunication of legal or proper Christians in any way by any sort of infliction. You persecute a Christian when you cause him to believe that you esteem him not to belong to the true and proper body of Christ. You persecute a Christian when, because of his religious opinions, you lay upon him the ban of proscription, civil, social, or ecclesiastical, of the weight of a feather. You persecute a Christian when you forbid him to cast out devils in Christ's name for the reason that he does not follow Christ as you follow him. You persecute Christians when you become a bigot; and you become a bigot when you persecute Christians.

Ignorance is the father and Superstition is the mother of persecution.

CHAPTER V.

HEREDITARY EXCLUSIVENESS.

ECCLESIASTICAL exclusiveness grows out of two circumstances, and bases itself on two different positions. First, hereditary, and second, ceremonial exclusiveness.

The ancestral or hereditary exclusiveness argues on this wise: That in consequence of some history or supposed history of the organization men claim connection with, their Church is superior to others, or perhaps it is the only true Church. Other Churches are not Churches, because these historical facts do not obtain in their case.

These historic facts may relate to the ordination of their ministers in a line backward—of which, perhaps, we have said enough—or to some real or supposed religious customs, or belief, or rites, which have been kept up in a line backward, reaching to the time of the apostles, or to very early times.

Every notion or consideration of this sort is nothing more nor less than apostolic succession. The doctrine of apostolic succession, as a system of philosophy, is the same, whether it relates to a succession of ordinations of ministers, a succession of sameness or uniformity in modes of worship, a succession of mode or custom in administering or receiving either of the sacraments, or a *succession* in any thing, so understood as to make the validity, valuableness, or superiority of a presently existing Church depend upon something in the history of that specific organization in the past ages of the world.

We are told that an existing Church is, or is not, a true Christian Church, because some persons who lived a hundred or a thousand years ago, and who claimed or were supposed to have claimed, to worship under the same external form or name, as a Presbyterian, Baptist, or Methodist, did or did not do or believe certain things. But we are totally and entirely uninformed *how* it is that the faith or practice of persons in past ages can affect the Christian character of persons or associations now. On this point there has probably never been uttered among men the slightest intimation. And surely the two facts amount to exactly nothing, unless some moral or spiritual relation be shown between them. In the absence of such philosophic explanation, it might just as well be said that an existing Church is or is not a Church, because there was an eclipse of the sun or moon, in the sixteenth, the tenth, or the fifth century.

What *relation* is there between the two circumstances? That question is easily answered. There is, supposing the history to be correct, a historic relation. But is religion history? Can religion, good or bad religion, be made out of either good or bad history?

The existing condition of a Church might as well be compared with some geographical or military fact of past existence, to test its validity, as to a historic ecclesiastical fact; for religion consists neither in geography, military tactics, nor history. Religion inquires only into the present personal relation between a man or a woman and Jesus Christ. And inquiries into the belief or practice, or any other facts respecting persons of times which are past, cannot answer this question.

But it may be assumed that the religious character of individual persons is a different thing from the legality of a Church. That may be. But will it be assumed that an asso-

ciation of pious Christian people, with their minister, regarded in their associate, aggregate character as a worshipping assembly, is not a Church? If they be Christians, they follow Christ. If they worship as Christians, they worship according to the Bible, or try to do so. And is not *that* what is meant by a Church?

The grand idea of exclusiveness seems to be this. There is an association of people who are pious. It is admitted they are Christians personally. If they die in their present condition, they will go to heaven. They live, therefore, in the favor of God, and walk in his commandments. This is the condition of each person individually considered. And here is another association of persons claiming to be Christians. In personal piety and godliness it is not pretended they are a whit above the persons first named. This latter association, however, is a true Church, and the former is no Church. And we inquire how this can be? We are informed that the objection against the validity of the former class, as a Church, does not lie against their piety—against the religious character of those persons. They are as sure of heaven as the surest, if they persevere in their course of humility, prayer, and uprightness. The objection lies against the organization—against the compact in the aggregate, and is because the rules of ecclesiastical association in regard to the officers of the association were not strictly observed in times past: that the predecessors in office of the present officers omitted to use certain words in the ordination of a minister, or in baptizing Christians, or in something else; and these official errors have not been, and in the nature of the case could not be, corrected by succeeding officers of the association.

And our reply to this is, supposing it all to be true, that it makes no sort of difference. As a member of the former association, one might reply: “I do not care a whit for all that. My only object in uniting with the association is to get

to heaven—to obey God—to be a Christian individually. I do not expect to get to heaven officially, or in connection with the official conduct of some officer. The end of association is answered if the people live holy, exert a good religious influence in the world, obey God, and get to heaven. A fig for the *association*, so that the *people in it* all follow Christ, propagate Christianity, and get to heaven.”

What is the association, considered abstractly and distinctly from the people who compose it? How can legal Christians compose and make up an illegal Church? To what does the legality of a Church refer, if not to the legality of the Christianity of the persons who compose the Church? What is it that makes an association of persons a Church, but the Christianity of the members, and their associating as Christians, for the purpose of carrying out their Christianity? What is the compact itself, abstractly considered from the religion of the parties, but ink and paper? The Church is the aggregate of the individual Christians who compose it. A Church is a company of Christians associated for Christian purposes. The Church catholic is *the whole* company of Christians on earth.

This proposition is true, beyond all controversy: The Church of God on earth is the unity of the several Christians on earth. A Christian is a person taken into Christ, or into Christ’s family or household. All those persons spoken of, or considered, in the aggregate compose the universal Church. And in like manner we speak of the several parts of the Church universal as Churches. So we speak of a congregation or company of Christians as a Church; and also of many congregations in confederation with each other, as Churches. This is only a slight variation of the several senses in which the term is used. Still, Church means Christians: Christians, in association, constitute a Church.

It is inquired then, if a person, not a Christian, in the

sense of being united to Christ by faith, cannot be a member of Christ's Church. The reply is, That is impossible. Nothing can be more absurd or contradictory than such a proposition. A man not a Christian be a member of Christ's body of Christians! As well might we suppose a man an American, who was born in Africa, and continues to live there. Christ recognizes but two classes of persons in this regard: those who are *his* by faith, and those who are *not his*, by unbelief.

Does a man become a Christian by consenting to be called a Christian, and having his name written in a list of names of Christians? Surely not. Men become Christians by a different process.

But it is answered, perhaps, Men who are not truly Christians do associate in Church organization with truly pious Christians; and how can we exclude these and retain those? That is, it is inquired, How can we distinguish between true and false Christians—that is, between persons who are and persons who are not Christians?

And the answer is, *We* cannot do it at all. But *our* inability to distinguish, in the hearts of men, between persons who are and those who are not Christians, does by no means prove that there *is no* such distinction.

It is, perhaps, very common for persons who are not Christians to be rated, by fallible, erring men, as Christians. But that is only a mark of human ignorance: it cannot change the character of the persons in question. Falsehood cannot become truth by ignorance esteeming it to be such.

Persons who are humanly reckoned to be members of Christ's Church, and who really and truly are not, are erroneously so reckoned, that is all. They are illegal Christians, that is, not Christians, and, *so far as they are concerned or named*, the association is an illegal Church. And suppose half, three-fourths, nine-tenths of the whole number of the sup-

posed Church are of this sort—spurious, illegal Christians—no matter; it does not affect the question in the least; it only reduces the true number of the true Church so much the more. And how far may this reduction proceed without affecting the validity of the Church?—that is, how small a number of Christians may compose a Church? For their being in seeming connection with supposed Church members who are not truly such, does not affect their character as Christians in the least, nor in the least affect the question of a Church.

The smallest number of Christians who can by possibility compose a Church, is “two or three.” This is expressly declared in the word of God: “Where *two or three* are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them.” It will not, it is presumed, be disputed that the presence of Christ in an association of men is the point of distinction between those who are and those who are not a Church of Christ. The presence of Christ is all we need, the absence of Christ is all we deplore.

If it can be supposed that a person not truly a Christian may be a member of Christ’s Church, then two such persons may, and then ten, and then a hundred, and so, all the association may be such; and then we have arrived at the absurdity of having a Christian Church without a Christian in it; which abrogates the distinction between a Church and a company of persons. Now if *men* had a Church, if it were not all the while *Christ’s* Church we are discoursing about, the case might be different. Men could take persons into *their* Church, if they had one, on such conditions as they would agree upon. But this is not the case.

Then, if this reasoning be correct, how is it that Christians in one place, and in one association, may speak of Christians in another place, and in another association, as not having or being a true Church? What is the rule? By what course

of reasoning are they excluded? *Why* are these persons a Church, when those are not? Mere flippancy of the tongue is not logic.

Let it be remembered that the authority of Christ, its presence or absence, constitutes the trueness or falseness of a Christian Church. And let it be further remembered, that this authority descends to us, through the period since Christ was on earth, in one of two ways : first, in the written Scriptures ; or, second, in successive communications from man to man in a line of offices or investitures, which is apostolic succession, and of which enough has been said.

CHAPTER VI.

CEREMONIAL EXCLUSIVENESS.

ANOTHER class of exclusiveness may with propriety, perhaps, be called *ceremonial*, because its principles and reasons are supposed to be found in the use or disuse of certain ceremonies made use of in worship. A religious ceremony is the performance of some religious duty, by such actions, forms, and circumstances, as are supposed to render it magnificent and solemn. Or it is the assemblage of rites and modes in which the duties or functions of the ministry are performed.

Much has been said with regard to religious ceremonies. Some think they ought to be abolished altogether, while others think they ought to be carried to the utmost possible extent, so that an air of pomp, magnificence, and array shall be thrown around every duty. Neither of these seems to be the true policy; for those who teach the former do not practice what they teach, and those who advocate the latter have gone quite away from Christianity. The truth seems to lie somewhere between the Romanists and the Quakers.

A uniform mode of conducting Divine service is a ceremony; or rather the manner in which it is conducted, if it be conducted in a regular and orderly manner, is a ceremony. The sacraments are necessarily administered with some ceremony. And the different modes of celebrating them are the different ceremonies used in their administration.

The Lord's Supper is sometimes administered in one kind of a ceremony, and sometimes in another. A great many

different kinds of ceremony are observed by different Churches and in different places in its use. And so of baptism. Sometimes it is administered by one kind of ceremony, sometimes by another. And so of receiving members into the Church, and of excluding disorderly persons therefrom. Sometimes one kind of ceremony is used, and sometimes another.

Now, in performing these various religious ceremonies, the effort seems, for the most part, with many persons, to be to get nearest, or as near as practicable, to the forms used by the apostles or very early Christians. They used *some* form, some ceremony, in partaking of the Lord's Supper, in baptism, in receiving and excluding Church members, etc.

But must that form necessarily always be used? Or suppose the precise form be not used—what then?

In the first place, we are not informed in the Scriptures—and no *other* information *can be* authentic—we are not informed *how*, by what ceremony, these several duties were performed by the earliest apostles and Christians. The Supper seems to have been prepared in “a large upper room”—and bread and wine were distributed among and partaken of by the disciples in memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are a great many other things respecting it of which we are not informed; such as the quantity taken by each, the time spent in the ceremony, the attitude they placed themselves in, the precise words used, etc.

Now, if it be said that it is absolutely necessary to follow the early example, then several questions arise: 1. Do we know certainly what the model is? The lack of information renders a compliance impossible. 2. In what particulars are we to conform to the early official model? Surely not in *every thing*. This is absolutely impossible. The room, the quantity of bread and wine used, the dress of the communicants, the posture, words, time of day, and many other cir-

cumstances that *certainly did* take place then, cannot possibly be followed by Christians in after-ages. Then *what particulars* are necessary, and what may be waived?

Again: if it be said that it is *necessary* to follow the apostolic example in these ceremonies, it is inquired, Necessary for what purpose? Necessary, it is presumed it is meant, in order to secure the approbation and blessing of Almighty God in the action. A proper or legal ceremony, then, will secure the blessing of God; an illegal or improper one will not.

Then, what is an illegal ceremony in administering or partaking of the Lord's Supper? And this raises the question, What is the Lord's Supper? The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, or solemn obligation, in which the Christian is reminded afresh of the death of Christ, and promises afresh obedience in his service. And this obligation is taken and received in the act of eating bread and drinking wine, which has been solemnly and religiously dedicated to that purpose. Now, how can a Christian solemnly and conscientiously reassume this obligation—being solemnly reminded of Christ's death for him, and sacredly promising anew to be faithful and obedient to God—how can he do this—all this—in some *form* that is illegal, the *ceremony* in which it is done being illegal?

We are told by good human authority—authority which is certainly every way reliable—that in the days of the apostles it was customary with the disciples to mix water with the wine used in the eucharist. (Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i., p. 169.) Now, this mingling was part of the ceremony. Did it, or could it, render it *illegal*? Or does the use of pure wine now render the sacrament itself illegal? What kind of wine is legal wine for this purpose? What kind of bread is legal bread for a legal sacrament?

The legality consists not in the *ceremony* or the mere external manner in which the thing is done; but in the conscientiousness and good faith in which the thing is done.

So far, then, as the Lord's Supper is concerned, it is impossible for the ceremony to be illegal, if nothing else be faulty. A ceremony cannot in itself, abstractly considered, be illegal. It is not a subject of legality or illegality. The blessing or approbation of God does not attach to the ceremony. It attaches to the fact and circumstance of good faith, solemn conscientiousness and religious intention in assuming the sacrament. Suppose the sacred elements be received in a sitting, or kneeling, or recumbent, or in a standing posture. How can any one of these different ceremonies be illegal? The thing is clearly impossible.

If, for instance, a person accustomed to see this sacrament administered in a kneeling posture, and being used to having his feelings solemnly impressed by this kneeling posture, were to adopt a standing or recumbent position, the question would arise, What is the cause of the change? If it be a mere freak of fancy, or is so performed for the mere purpose of appearing odd or of exciting attention or remark, then the sacrament would be illegal. It would not, however, be illegal *because of the posture*, but because of the absence of religious solemnity and sacredness which led to it.

And just so we reason with regard to baptism. Baptism is an instituted rite or ceremony in which a person is received into the visible association of Christians. That is evidently the object and end of the thing. A solemn ceremony is connected with it for the same purpose for which all ceremonies are used, viz., to impress the thing solemnly and religiously upon the heart.

In the case of the holy eucharist, *bread* and *wine* were arbitrarily selected as the elements to be used. In this sacrament *water* was ordained.

The natural emblematic fitness of bread and wine in the first, and of water in the last, does not displace the fact that the appointment was arbitrary, because something else might

have been selected. Bread is a very fitting substance to use as an emblem, because its chief property is to sustain man and keep him alive. Wine is also a very appropriate substance, because it has, in a high degree, the property or quality of invigoration. And for the other purpose—the solemn *designation* of a person as a Christian, by which he is now contradistinguished from the pollutions and filthiness of the world—what could be more appropriate than *water* to be used as a symbol?

The bread and wine in the one case, and the water in the other, are mere symbols. Of course it is not designed in the one case that the bread and wine actually strengthen and invigorate the body, nor in the other that the water actually cleanses the body of external impurity. In fact, the strengthening and invigorating in the one case, and the cleansing in the other, do not refer to the body, but to the soul.

Bread and *wine* are the ordained symbols of commemoration in the one case, and *water* the ordained symbol of sanctification or setting apart, in the other. The symbols of commemoration in the one case are to be used in the name of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The symbol of designation in the other case is to be used in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. “Do this in remembrance of *Me*.”—“Baptizing them in the name of *the Father*, and of *the Son*, and of *the Holy Ghost*.”

All this is exceedingly plain, simple, beautiful, reasonable, philosophic, and easily understood. The objects, aims, intent, meaning, and end of the two things are as easily comprehended and understood as any thing can be.

But now we hear a great many things said about *the manner* in which these symbolic services are to be performed. What particular ceremony is used? *How* are the symbols administered? Here a great many questions may arise. For

instance, in the eucharist, do the persons receiving it stand up or sit down? Or in what posture do they place themselves? And what posture does the administrator occupy? How much bread and how much wine does he use? What words, if any, are spoken, and by whom, in the ceremony? In what kind of vessels are the elements served? What kind of officer must sanctify the elements, and by what ceremony, if any, other than prayer? May the same person administer the elements to himself? These and other questions pertaining to the *ceremony* of the eucharist are not wholly unimportant; but this is not the question. The question we are concerned in just now is, How do they or how can they affect the *legality* of the sacrament?

If the appointed emblems be used : if they be consecrated in some regularly appointed and solemn mode by prayer : if they be taken in religious service, in solemn remembrance of Christ's death, as our atoning sacrifice, is not that a sacrament? Can any thing add to its legality? Can any mere ceremonies make that which is legal more than legal? Remember, the question of legality is the question whether the Saviour will or will not recognize the service and own it. The question of legality does not refer to what men have said or done or enacted; but to what God has ordained and will recognize.

Now, would it or would it not be superstitious and improper to contend that that man is not a Christian, or that his Church is not a Church, because it is his or its custom to receive the Lord's Supper in a sitting posture, or in a kneeling posture? Or because of the presence or absence of some other ceremony in the setting apart or investiture of office of the person who performed the ceremony of consecration of the emblems? Or because too great or too small a quantity of bread or of wine was used? Or because some precise words were or were not used? Surely this would be superstition.

And we reason in the same way in regard to baptism.

Baptism is a rite by which we distinguish Christians from people of the world. It must, of course, in order for it to be performed in good faith, be performed in a regularly appointed manner; water must be used as the emblem, and in the sacrament there must be a solemn, religious separation of a person from the world, and a dedication of him to God, in obedience to the institution of this ordinance by Jesus Christ.

Would it not, as in the former case, be improper to pronounce that that person is not a Christian, because the *cere-mony* in which his baptism was administered was in some way defective? For instance, the exact words in the entire service were not used; or the posture of the person administering or receiving the sacrament was not right; or the kind or quantity of water used was not exactly right. Surely questions of this sort cannot affect the *validity* of the sacrament. Questions affecting the validity of the sacrament must refer to the sacrament itself; that is, the obligation itself. A sacrament is an obligation, or the thing by which a person assumes a solemn religious obligation.

What do we mean by a sacrament? Is water a sacrament? Is water *used in any way*, or by the assistance of any person, a sacrament? Surely not. A *sacrament* is an *obligation*; and the water used is a mere external symbol, in the use of which the obligation is assumed. To say that the water, or something done with it, is a sacrament, is to talk very unwisely. The *sacrament* is the obligation entered into in the reception of the baptism.

The physical or real things or substances used in performing the sacrament are merely symbolic, not real. The quantity of bread and wine cannot be so increased as to produce actual strengthening and invigoration to the soul. A symbol is, in its nature, abstractly considered, inert and valueless. It is impossible, likewise, to increase the quantity of water used in baptism, so that it may produce a cleansing of the

soul. An additional quantity is of precisely the same import in the one case as in the other.

There is nothing that makes an association of men a Church but the Christianity of the persons composing it. There is nothing that can debar an association of men, claiming to be a Church, from being properly and truly so considered, but the lack of Christianity. And Christianity does not consist in forms. It consists in the infusion of vital godliness into the soul and life. Forms become necessary or useful, only as a means of extension and healthfulness to this vital religious principle.

The idea, then, that men are not Christians, because the minister at whose hands they received the emblems of the death of Christ was not constituted a minister in some particular way; or because the minister to whose persuasions and exhortations they yielded, when they determined to forsake sin and be Christians, was not ordained in some particular way; or because the minister who officiated in their baptism was not descended, lineally or chronologically, from a proper spiritual ancestry, or ecclesiastical parentage; or because the quantity of water used in their baptism, or in the baptism of the minister at whose hands they received baptism, was not sufficiently large; or because they were too young or too old when they received baptism—all these objections seem to indicate a forsaking of the substance and a grasping of the shadow.

If we deny Christianity to persons who profess Christianity, our objections should be laid against their Christianity, and not against the mere forms and ceremonies which attend its practice.

CHAPTER VII.

INTOLERANCE.

ECCLESIASTICAL intolerance is the denying to persons or Churches the right to think freely for themselves in matters of religion, by Churches, societies, or individuals. It is the making of creeds, or the laying down of tenets or constructions of Scripture, and imposing them upon individuals, under pain of some kind of punishment.

There are no two persons that construe the Bible in all things alike. So there are no two persons who think alike on all religious questions. Religious toleration is the agreeing to disagree on all questions not plainly laid down in the Bible as essential to religion. It is the *toleration* of religious error in a professing Christian, who tries, no matter how feebly or ignorantly, to be an humble disciple of Jesus Christ.

Intolerance, on the contrary, denies fellowship and Christianity to a person who does not think, on some point or points, as we think, or according to the creed which we have established or to which we subscribe.

The things absolutely essential in Christianity are so plainly laid down in the Bible, that there is perhaps very little, if any, disagreement among professing Christians with regard to them. There are, however, in the Bible, a great many things, in faith and practice, deemed very important in religion, greatly useful or greatly hurtful, which may be believed and

practiced with great advantage, or great detriment, though not absolutely necessary to be believed or to be excluded.

Intolerance is the compelling another to believe or practice any of these things, on pain of some kind or some degree of punishment. It does not matter how great or how small the punishment may be to make out a case of intolerance.

Religious error may and should always be met with disapprobation, but never with punishment. Here is the precise line that divides between tolerance and intolerance.

Disapprobation is the act of the mind, whereby we condemn what is believed to be wrong. Or, secondly, it may mean the expression of such disapproval by appropriate words or actions ; but it can never amount to punishment in any degree. Punishment is the infliction of *any* pain or suffering on a person for crime, offence, or error.

Ecclesiastical intolerance, then, is the infliction of some pain or suffering on a person, because of his religious belief. It may amount to an expression which lessens the person in the estimation of men, or it may amount to the stake, or the inquisition.

It has been well remarked in regard to it, that "The pretence of superior knowledge, sanctity, and authority for its support, is the disgrace of reason, the grief of wisdom, and the paroxysm of folly. To fetter the conscience is injustice ; to ensnare it is an act of sacrilege ; but to torture it, by an attempt to force its feelings, is horrid intolerance ; it is the most abandoned violation of all the maxims of religion and morality."

For intolerance to be obnoxious to these just animadversions, it is not necessary that the principle be carried as far as fire and fagot. The animadversion lies against the principle, not against the degree to which it is carried.

There are two ways, and only two ways, in which religious error may be met and disposed of. It may be met, first,

by intolerance, persecution, punishment; and, secondly, by reason, argument, expostulation, reproof, persuasion, entreaty, exhortation, etc. This is the manifestation of a spirit of love: the former is the manifestation of the spirit of hate. Either may be administered in any conceivable degree; but they do not lose respectively their specific identity and character. The one forms the basis and makes up the superstructure of each and every teaching in the Bible. The other abrogates every thing that is in the Bible. They are antipodes to each other. The one is tolerance—the other is *intolerance*. Christianity prescribes that religious error shall be met in a spirit of love, forbearance, kindness, and entreaty; but man knows better than this, and resorts to intolerance, persecution, and punishment for the eradication of religious error.

Intolerance may be regarded in two different points of light. Leaving out the savage brutality of civilization which punishes men for opinion's sake by the civil magistrate, as not coming quite within the range of the few remarks intended for this chapter, we may mention the intolerance of the Church, and the intolerance of individuals.

It is intolerant in a Church to lay a burden upon a person which causes pain of body or of mind, because of his religious belief. Religion, to attach to Christianity, requires, in order to be religion, the largest liberty of the mind, and the greatest freedom of the will. Coercive religion would be as much of a solecism as coercive freedom.

What, then, are we to say, and how are we to discourse of those Churches which *require* of a Christian that he believe, as a matter of religious faith, that the place where Philip baptized the eunuch was a brook or river of water of sufficient depth to allow of a man being plunged all over in it, and that the eunuch was actually submerged?—that in the Greek language the word which is rendered “baptize,” always

means to immerse, or submerge?—that when Christ says to the apostles, in the last of Matthew, “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,” it means that ministers must, in all cases, to the end of time, be ordained in a line of successive diocesan bishops, in order to the existence of a Church or a ministry; and that the words cannot have any other construction?

What right has a Church, unless intolerance be an ecclesiastical right, to excommunicate a professing Christian because he believes, or does not believe, this, that, or the other supposed fact or historic occurrence, which he does not plainly read in the Bible? or what right has any ecclesiastical authority to prevent a person coming into the Church for like reasons?

It must be remembered that excommunication is not from the Methodist Church, or from the Baptist Church, or from the Episcopalian Church, or from the Presbyterian Church; but that it is excision from the Church of God. Methodists have no Church; Baptists have no Church; Episcopalians have no Church; Presbyterians have no Church. Jesus Christ has the only Church; and the officers and members of those branches of Christ’s Church are, respectively, officers and members in the Church of God.

The same cause, then, which would exclude a person from one Church, or prevent him from coming into it, must necessarily operate in the same way in regard to any other Church. If a Church, or any officers of a Church, have a right to prevent a person from coming into a Church, or exclude him therefrom, because of his belief that a certain quantity of water was not used in some or in all baptisms in the apostolic days, then it is unquestionably the duty of all other officers in all other Churches, who are vested with the power of excluding or receiving members, to do the same thing in all similar cases. If a Calvinistic Church has a *right* to exclude or keep out a member because he is not a Calvinist, then all Arminian

Churches are *bound* to exclude and keep out members because they *are* Arminians, if it be granted that they are both true Christian Churches.

This argument is absolutely irresistible. All Churches have the same Bible; and it is very certain there is nothing in the Bible which prescribes the conditions of membership in the Methodist, Episcopal, Baptist, or Presbyterian Churches; for these distinctive branches of the Church of God were not known in the days when the Bible was written.

No Church has a right to prescribe conditions of membership in its own or any other communion. If it has a Church *of its own*, independent of any other communion, and independent of the Church of Christ, then it may do so, but surely not otherwise. All legislation on this subject was closed for ever, eighteen hundred years ago. Then and there it was determined, finally, for what a person should, and for what a person should not, be excommunicated from or be kept out of the Christian Church. These are two things—*immorality*, and *disbelief* in Jesus Christ. There is not the slightest intimation, by the most far-fetched construction ever attempted to be made, within the lids of the Bible, that a person may be excommunicated from or be denied membership in the Church of Christ, for any thing other than one or both of these causes.

It is, perhaps, just as correct a way to state the proposition—maybe more so—to say, that the Church possesses no power of excommunication. It merely pronounces judicially an existing fact or truth. The delinquent Church-member first places himself out of the Church, by disbelief or immorality, or, most likely, both; and the proper authorities of the Church find and pronounce the fact; so that it was not the Church that *put him out*: he first put himself out.

But upon what principles of ecclesiastical jurisprudence found in the Bible can it be said, that when two Christian men differ in their construction of the eighth chapter of

Romans, or some other chapter, that one or both, by such imperfect acquaintance with biblical hermeneutics, must be placed beyond the pale of the Church of God? Is not such a proposition startling to the consciences of conscientious Christians? How can it be said that a man places himself beyond the pale of Christ's Church because he believes that the water where the eunuch was baptized, or where some one else was baptized in the days of the apostles, was only six inches deep?

This would not be the *Christian* religion: it would be topographical religion. A man's views or opinions of the topography of Ænon, or of the fordable or non-fordable condition of the Jordan, at some certain place, is to determine whether he is or is not a Christian! Why, there are very few Christians who live, or who ever did live, who either saw or have had a very correct and explicit topographical description of these places. How *can* a man with certainty ever attain to Christianity, if its conditions be so far beyond his reach?

Did ever Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, hear of such conditions of Christianity? Did his apostles ever dream of such things? And if neither the Saviour nor his apostles engrafted them upon the Christian system, then their practice is intolerance—then Churches persecute for opinion's sake—then we condemn intolerance with one hand, while we encourage, and propagate, and practice it with the other.

But if these things do belong to the Christian system, let us be consistent, and require of men as implicit faith in the depth of the waters of Ænon, and the strength of the current and fordableness of the Jordan, and in the true classic meaning of baptize, as in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the conditions of religion, whatever they may be, must be met.

But the principle of intolerance must also be looked at in its application to individuals.

The principle of intolerance is manifested as fully and as perfectly in individual sentiments and actions, as in the injustice and the ravings of associate misrule and persecution.

It is not enough that religious intolerance be lowered a little below the infernal and frantic ferocity of Romish bigotry, reeling and gloating in madness and savage cruelties. It is not confined to the inquisition and the stake, but diffuses itself by piecemeal, and exhibits itself as well and as plainly in individual actions. Religion does not require its diffusion or its modification, but its entire extirpation. The principle is wrong, and really strikes as deadly a blow at the pure and peaceful principles of soft and loving Christianity as does any other crime.

The principle of toleration is violated whenever and by whomsoever a Christian—a person known to be or believed to be a Christian—is persecuted in any way, to any extent, by any person or persons. The man or the woman, of great or of small influence, in public or in private, who, in thought, or in word, or in deed, excludes a professing Christian from the Church of God, is guilty of the stake and the fagot. He is not guilty of so much wrong as the man who goes farther than he in the same road; but he has violated the principle—he has condemned the teachings of Jesus Christ on this particular point.

The force of the truth of this declaration cannot be evaded by any pretended inability to construe, or attempt to misconstrue, the words “*professing Christian.*” The man who professes to believe in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, and who does not furnish, by acts of immorality, a denial of the truth of the statement, is a professing Christian.

The principle of intolerance will, of course, also apply to persecutions against persons for not being or professing to be Christians. And here it *has* applied, to the disgrace of humanity and the shame of the Church. But our remarks

just now are intended more particularly for persecutions *in* the Church.

Intolerance in the Church is that which lies against professing Christians because they do not profess the right creed; because they do not think as we think; because they follow not with us; not because they do not follow Christ, but because they do not follow as we follow.

It is admitted on all hands that there is a vast amount of error in the Church—in all Churches and with all persons. This is not the question. The question is whether we are to meet the religious errors of professing Christians with the rod of excision, or with the reasonings and expostulations of brotherly love and Christian forbearance? whether we are to take them by the hand and say, “My brother,” and thus by kindness win them to the truth in regard to that particular error, and, in turn, be ourselves won by them, perchance, away from some cherished error we ourselves may have fallen into, by the same law of brotherly kindness, or whether we are to turn to him, either in spirit or in fact, the back of our hand, and say, “Away! you are not *in* the Church?” This principle of private, moral, or social excommunication now claims our attention; and it becomes us to discriminate between it and Christianity proper, or to point out its error.

It is not necessary, in order to excommunication, for the officers of a Church to assemble, and by formal adjudication to pass a sentence of excommunication, and write the pronouncement down upon paper, and have an official signature placed thereto.

What is excommunication, in its application to the person excommunicated? It is the production and publication of a belief among men that the person in question is not in or a part of the Church of God. This may be done in a hundred ways.

If I cause a person to believe that that man is not a mem-

ber of the true Church of Christ because he is a Presbyterian—for that, as I say, strict episcopal ordination of a minister is necessary to the existence of a Church, and none can be in the Church who are not under the pastorate of such a minister, and the Presbyterian belongs to no such pastorate—I as completely excommunicate him as the most formal and solemn court could excommunicate, so far as public credence attaches to or acquiesces in the truth of the statement in either case. The most solemn or authoritative ecclesiastical court cannot excommunicate a man, so far as the man himself is concerned—that is, it cannot inflict on him the punishment of excommunication, if no one believes the truth of or regards the force of the pronunciation which the court makes.

And, on the other hand, in the entire absence of all formal proceedings, if I set on foot the idea, in conversation or in any other way, that certain persons are not members of the Church of Christ—supposing them to have previously sustained the reputation of having been Church members—and everybody believes and regards the truth of the statement, they are completely excommunicated.

The punishment of excommunication consists in the being deprived of the enjoyment of the reputation of being a valid Christian. The official writing of a sentence of excommunication does not necessarily lessen or affect the real Christianity the man possesses, supposing him to have any. The knowledge, however, that he is not regarded as a Christian—that men have no confidence in his Church membership, in the genuineness of his Christianity—is a lash of punishment upon a conscientious man; and it is very likely to exercise a deleterious reflex influence upon his religion itself. Now, it does not matter in the least how this loss in reputation is brought about. It may be brought about by a formal ecclesiastical sentence; or it may be brought about by the preachings and teachings of over-wise and intolerant sectarian ministers; or

it may be brought about in the more silent and private moulding of public sentiment by influential men. In either case, if the thing be effected, all the results of excommunication follow, and it matters not a whit to the man *how* the thing was done.

If, then, any man holds publicly, by outcry or otherwise, that I am not a valid Christian because “apostolic hands”—albeit the apostles are all dead—have not been laid on my head in “confirmation,” or because my minister was not ordained by the proper “authority,” or the proper ceremony, as he thinks, or because too much or too little water was used in my baptism, or because of any thing I have conscientiously done or neglected to do, wherein he differs from me in opinion, he, so far as he is concerned, so far as his influence goes, so far as his statement is believed to be true, effectually excommunicates me from the Church of God, and inflicts upon me all the pains and penalties of excommunication.

It is the privilege, nay, it is the bounden duty of all Christians to keep up a clear and open line of demarcation between the Church and the world. The very nature of religion requires this; and the word of God abundantly confirms and enforces the requisition. Christianity cannot be Christianity without it. But *where is*—what constitutes the line and the point of distinction between the world and the Church? Is it the same now as it was in the days when the New Testament was written? If so, then the question is easily answered. If the test of the Church and of Christianity has not changed in these eighteen hundred years last past, then the precise and only point of distinction between the Church and the world—between Christians and men who are not Christians—between those who gather with me, and those who scatter abroad—between those who serve Him, and those who serve Him not—is this: *belief in Jesus Christ, and unbelief in Jesus Christ.*

Is it said, in reply to this, and in reply to the Bible, that some men believe in Jesus Christ whose immoral lives do not entitle them to be rated as Christians or as Church members? This is impossible. It is a plain, blank contradiction in ideas. No fact can be true, when the best evidence the nature of the case admits of testifies wholly against it. Immorality of life is the best evidence the nature of the case admits of against a supposed belief in Jesus Christ. It might as well be said that a man is a mathematician who never learned the multiplication-table, or the nature of a square. Ignorance of these things is the very proof itself of his not being a mathematician; and just so in the other case.

A man may believe some things about Jesus Christ. He may believe many things about him that are true—about his history, his teachings, or his person; but he cannot believe *in* him as his Saviour, and live an immoral life. To suppose that, would be to suppose that there is not a radical and peremptory distinction between Christianity and immorality. Then, if a man be excommunicated for aught else than unbelief, evidenced by either immorality or by any thing else, he is excommunicated outside of and beyond the range of the Bible; or, in other words, he is a victim of intolerance and persecution.

It is a common thing—strange that it is so—but it is a common thing for men to suffer intolerant excommunication for the most trifling causes imaginable. Men inflict upon Christians all the pains and penalties of excommunication—that is, as far as they are capable of the infliction—for causes which, in the absence of a blinded bigotry and a blind intolerance, would seem to be very inadequate, to say the least of them.

If a man does not believe that Polycarp was “the first bishop of Lyons,” and that he ordained Irenæus after he himself was dead, he is excommunicated! This would appear

strange, but it is the high-Church doctrine in its plainest and simplest settings-forth. If a man does not believe that in one hundred and seventeen instances of successive bishops, they ordained each other in succession, when it is well known to everybody that in at least most instances the predecessor was dead before the successor was ordained, he is excommunicated. That is, if he does not believe in the apostolic succession as a fact, he is no Christian; and to believe in the apostolic succession as a fact, is confessedly impossible, because it requires, according to all the proof of it ever attempted or claimed to be produced, that a man believe that, in a majority of one hundred and twenty instances, the dead man ordained his successor after he was dead.

If a man does not believe that every one of the three thousand who were converted to Christianity on the day of Pentecost were baptized with a quantity of water at least sufficient for him to swim in, he is no Christian, and suffers excommunication as a righteous penalty!

These things appear strange. Really, they would be justly obnoxious to the charge of the most solemn and insufferable trifling, but for the broad seal of undeniable truth that lies upon their surface.

Men are summarily excommunicated by the piece, by the score, by the hundred, by the thousand, and by the million, not only for something, but for nothing. The frantic dissoluteness of Romish madness, in its silliest efforts to outdo Diabolus, never set up an inquisition more inquisitorial, nor set on foot a system of intolerance more intolerant than all this. Truth is stranger than fiction, truly. Ordinary blindness is sharp-sighted compared with the blindness of religious intolerance.

It is true that these excommunicators do not put us to the stake; but they nevertheless maintain the principles of the stake; and if those principles were left unrestrained by the

arm of civil authority, and the power of an outside public opinion, got up and kept alive by the indirect influences of civil power, the developments of human nature, and the native character of fanaticism, abundantly testify that they would very soon lead on to the stake.

The Bible says, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are a Christian. Fanaticism says, Believe in some certain facts that we believe respecting the Church government that was practiced in Palestine; and respecting the “authority” of the bishop—always taking care to spell the word with a capital B; and respecting the precise official character of Timothy, and Titus, and a dozen others; and respecting the manner in which “ministerial authority” is transmitted from generation to generation down the stream of time; and respecting the exact classic meaning of the Greek word βαπτίζω, and its “cognates,” whether they have any exact meaning or not; and respecting the strength and depth of current and condition of the river Jordan; and respecting the waters of Ænon; and respecting about a hundred other things, most of which were never heard of by one-half of the Christians in Christendom. And then, if they wont believe—the stubborn dolts!—why, turn them out of the Church, and otherwise punish and persecute them until they do believe as we believe! And if still they be incredulous, ruin them in reputation, and sink them in the hatred and contempt of all good men. And if still they wont believe, get fire and burn them: burn belief into them! Torture them to death; for surely the stake and the rack are the proper and legitimate tests and instruments of truth!!!

CHAPTER VIII.

DEFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE.

ANOTHER ground of exclusiveness urged against the Christianity of persons claiming to be Christians, and against the validity of Churches which claim to be Christian Churches, is the defectiveness of their knowledge.

At first view it would seem strange that defective knowledge should be urged against the Christianity of either individuals or organizations. And yet it is abundantly so urged. The objection is not urged in these words. I only say this is the thing objected against.

Persons, as they attain to the years of accountability, and meditate a profession and practice of religion, as well as those in more advanced years, at some period in their lives, resolve upon a reformation of life and the practice of the godliness and piety enjoined in the Bible. They are surrounded with a variety of circumstances. They have all inherited, without knowing it or intending it, many prejudices and prepossessions from their parents. Some of them relate to religion. Many persons have been brought up by parents professing religion, and who were members of some Church. Their early associations, also, have led them, imperceptibly, away from, or nearer to, the denominational opinions of this, that, and the other Church.

Upon the whole, it is abundantly true that all men, before they embrace religion, are very powerfully influenced, in some

directions, in favor of this or that denomination of Christians, in contradistinction to other denominations.

They look at the real Christianity of persons professing to be Christians, irrespective of mere technical questions of forms or ceremonies. They very naturally judge of men and of Churches by the apparent Christianity, piety, and holiness of heart and life which they see.

By and by the truth of Christianity forces itself upon their consciences, and they determine—I must, I will be a Christian. In every individual case these persons are either honest or dishonest—they meditate a change in life, either for the sake of Christianity itself, in good faith, to enable them so to live that they may die in the favor of God, or they enter upon it from some of the various motives that prompt to hypocrisy.

If they be sincere in the matter, they are under the unavoidable necessity of determining a more important question than they ever decided before in their lives. They are obliged to determine a question, in all the earnestness of good faith, which comes very near to the question of their salvation. That question is, *What Church shall I join?* This is not a question of mere fancy or personal preference, but is one of vital import. For it is impossible for a person to be a true, sincere Christian, without worshipping in that communion where he conscientiously believes he can practice and enjoy religion most and best, in the circumstances in which he is at the time situated. So that the question, what Church he shall join, is nearly, if not quite, equivalent to the question, whether he will or not be a true and sincere Christian.

Churchism, whatever else it may be, is certainly not Christianity. It is very clear that a person who joins this or that branch of the Church of Christ from mere ecclesiastical preference, moved by a party spirit, or the zeal of a sectary, whatever else he may be, is not a Christian.

Then, supposing the man to be honest with himself, and

sincerely desirous of the salvation of his soul and the advancement of true religion, he necessarily unites himself with that branch of the Church where he believes he can live nearest to Christ, and best promote his glory. This was an honest question with him, and must have been settled, necessarily, in view of the cross, and the grave, and the judgment-seat. And consequently we see him honestly trying to be a Christian.

And now let us suppose that this man is mistaken with regard to some historical fact which occurred, or was said to have occurred, in the history of the Church, ten or a hundred or a thousand years ago. Suppose he is mistaken with regard to the truth or import of some ecclesiastical or theological question which has obtained in the Church. Suppose he was less wise than some other man with regard to the question of apostolic succession, or some question about baptism, or about the Lord's Supper. He acts, however, conscientiously, with the best mind and light he has.

And then let us suppose that, according to the doctrine of exclusiveness, this man, because of these errors, has got into the wrong Church, that is, into no Church, and therefore he is not a Christian.

Now, if these things can be true, then Christianity is no longer Christianity, but a mere system of philosophy. If there be such a thing as Christianity, it cannot possibly be sought, sincerely and devotedly, in the Bible, in vain. But if it be a system of metaphysical philosophy, then it may be missed, no matter how faithfully and devotedly it be pursued, if the truth in it be pursued with defective knowledge.

The objection urged against Christianity by Volney and his followers was this: "What!" said he, "does God require every man to be a critical judge?" He argued on this wise: How can any man hope, supposing Christianity to be true,

ever to become a Christian amidst such masses of unsettled opinions? And his argument is irresistible if it be admitted that Christianity does really require every technical truth, and historic fact, to be truly and properly settled.

But religion is not a system of philosophy, as is supposed by Volney, and by exclusives. It presents very few truths which are absolutely necessary to be believed in all cases.

The inquiry was once made of one who may be supposed to have been correctly informed on the subject: "*What shall I do to be saved?*" And what was the answer? According to the doctrine both of Volney and of exclusiveness, it must have been this: Go and dig into the mines of metaphysical philosophy, search the ancient languages, learn the idiom of each of them, sit at the feet of the sagest doctors, put into requisition a mind that can grasp the most powerful and the most slender thoughts, be more wise than the wisest, and at the very bottom of the well of knowledge, there you shall find the only true elements of salvation.

But the answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Then the true religion of true Christianity is brought completely down to the capacity of all men. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ:" that, it seems, is the test of Christianity. The Apostle Paul was, then, neither a master nor a disciple in this school of exclusiveness.

It is still true, however, that knowledge is absolutely necessary to the existence of Christianity, and, consequently, to the existence of Churches. But this is not the knowledge of letters, of authors, of books. It is not the knowledge which literature imparts, which science affords—the boasted lore of philosophy. It is the more important knowledge of intrinsic godliness.

There is a vast difference between knowledge and education. Men are oftentimes educated far in advance of their

knowledge. A man may be educated in the science of hydraulics, and the expansive power of water when heated. And to this may be added a critical and scientific acquaintance with mechanics. And yet, there is an illiterate negro who knows a hundred times more about the practical use of a steam-engine than the scholar who never saw one. Thousands will trust their lives in the hands of the one, when they would not risk themselves a cable-length in the keeping of the other.

There may be a man deeply versed in physiology and natural history : he can tell you the name, and use, and relation of every bone, and muscle, and tendon, and fibre, and ligament in a horse, and all about his history, and yet his *knowledge of a horse* may be exceedingly defective. A man who does not know the meaning of the word *ligament*, may know forty times more about his real properties and practical uses.

And just so of Christianity. A man may be deeply versed in the classics of Christianity : he may know much of its history, of biblical hermeneutics, of oriental customs and times, and yet he may be little acquainted with the Christian *religion*.

Religion is not philosophy. It is a practical knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour. Religion and the science of Christianity differ as widely as do the theory and practice of any of the practical sciences. Religion does not consist in a theoretical or scientific knowledge of the system of Christianity. A man may be an adept in the one, and a dolt in the other.

From all this, however, it does not follow that a scientific acquaintance with Christianity is not useful to experimental godliness. The learned theologian, *with the same experience in practical Christianity*, is a better Christian than his illiterate brother. This superiority, however, consists more in an ability to advance Christianity in the world, than in its

progress in his own heart. But religion is so perfect a system, and so completely linked together in all its parts, that ability to extend its principles far and wide, if put into execution, is by no means without its reflex benefits upon the heart and life. So that notwithstanding a deep and thorough knowledge of or acquaintance with the theoretic principles of Christianity is not necessary to the enjoyment of religion, and a deep knowledge of its benefits, yet it possesses all the benefits which science and learning are capable of yielding in any other department of human progress or perfectibility. Real science and true philosophy are as beneficial in religion as elsewhere, but not any more so.

Then, if these plain, simple considerations be founded in truth and sound reason, how can it be pleaded, on the part of religious exclusives, that a man of personal godliness, of practical piety, is not, in all things, and in every way he may be viewed, a true and legal Christian, irrespective of his knowledge of Christianity as a science, and notwithstanding any misinformation he may have received with regard to any of the forms or ceremonies connected with worship, or any facts or circumstances connected with the history of religion? Legal Christianity can rise no higher than this, according to plain declarations of the word of God. "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" That is the beginning and the end, the magnitude and the boundaries of the religion of Christianity. Personal piety, personal devotion to God, personal reliance on Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour, personal denial of the sins and fascinations of the world, personal faith, constitute a Christian in the highest, and broadest, and amplest sense.

It is strangely supposed by some that this course of reasoning may be answered by the posing question as to how far men may go away from the orthodoxy of the Bible, and still retain their ecclesiastical validity. And so we are asked if

the societies of Universalists, and Mormons, and Millerites, and the like, are Christian Churches? And if not, *why* not?

These questions have been already, in effect, answered in the foregoing arguments. The ecclesiastical validity of these societies extends as far as their *Christianity* does. The measure and test of their ecclesiastical validity is also the measure and test of the validity of their personal religion. Universalists and Mormons are not Churches, because they are not Christians.

Men are not Christians because they are Methodists, because they are Baptists, because they are Episcopalians; but because they possess the Christian *religion*. Religion is the substratum, and muscle, and vitality of Christianity, and hence of valid Christian Churches.

Surely it will not be held that an association of true Christians does not constitute a legal Church. It does, if religion be the test of Christianity. But if literary acquirements be the test of Christianity—or, what is the same thing, if Christianity be a system of philosophy, and if its test be the perfection of metaphysical attainment, then the legal and proper religion of individual persons composing an association does no more prove them to be a true Church, than it would prove them to be true Free-Masons, or true republicans. But the truth is, that true Christianity consists in true religion, and not in the excellence of scientific education.

But besides the exclusiveness of literary pride, we have also that of bigotry and ignorance. For it is no uncommon thing to see men who scarcely ever read the Bible carefully through, and whose reading otherwise has scarcely extended beyond three or four sectarian pamphlets, flatly and sweepingly exclude from the legal pale of Christianity three-fourths, or five-sixths, or perchance nineteen-twentieths of the profess-

ing Christians of the age. It is strange indeed that it is so, but so the truth is.

And this wholesale exclusion is not by any means attempted to be levelled against their religion, their piety, their holiness of life, but against the defectiveness of their knowledge of Christianity as a religious system. Hence they regard Christianity as a system of philosophy, and themselves as critics in classic and biblical hermeneutics.

This, it is repeated, is strange indeed, but nevertheless abundantly true. Men are scholars above the ripest scholars, whose reading is confined to the spelling-book, or perchance to a repeated re-reading of a select portion of a select chapter of the New Testament. With such persons to *know every thing* about religion is a mere commonplace. And for one to fail to know precisely according to the straight-edge of their ignorance and superstition, is to sin against the Holy Ghost, and place themselves beyond the realms of Christendom.

Persons who can scarcely read and write, or at least who have studied the Bible very little, can oftentimes tell you more about the biblical teachings respecting baptism; for instance, than other persons of ten times their talent who have spent a quarter or a half of a century in learning and inquiring into the subject in all the languages in which it is treated of!

Hannah More has well said that the strongest light cannot penetrate eyes that are closed against it. Bigotry effectually prevents a man from making search for the truth, because it conceives itself to be truth's casket. Prejudice has no need for truth, because it is itself an improvement upon the system, or at least its substitute. A Roman governor once asked, "What is truth?" and then instantly turned away for fear he would get an answer.

But again. Ecclesiastical exclusives are the very first to

violate their own principles, and the most constant in their repeated violations.

Let us suppose, for instance, that it be held by some Christians that the Methodist Church, or any other, holds and teaches spurious Christianity. No matter what may be the cause, Mr. Wesley was not ordained right, or some one else, in bygone ages, was or was not truly and legally ordained or baptized—or some of its members have not been properly baptized, or properly confirmed; some or all of the ministers of that Church misconstrued some one or more passages of holy writ; some one or more of King James's translators were not quite well enough acquainted with Greek and Hebrew; the external government of the Church is not sufficiently concentrated, or it is too much concentrated—it is too rigidly administered, or is too feebly administered. No matter on what ground the exclusion is made—and it is well known that different classes of exclusives excommunicate this whole Church on each one of these separate grounds, at least, and other Churches on similar grounds—for some one or more of these reasons, the Methodist Church teaches a spurious Christianity.

Then what is the duty of true Christians? This spurious Church which teaches this spurious Christianity is the most numerous of all the spurious Churches. And supposing that the errors and falsehoods she teaches are as radical and damnable as those of other spurious Churches—which is at least probable—then what is the immediate duty of Christians with regard to this false Church? It is obvious. It is their first, and grandest, and most imperative duty to wage against it a bold, and open, and fearless war of extermination.

But instead of this, what is the course pursued in the premises? We occasionally hear a passing, and, perchance, a feeble word against it. We see no decided, outright demon-

stration of opposition. The war they make against it is even more feeble than that which they wage against common sin. Methodism is often, among them, regarded as less dangerous to Christianity than drunkenness, or profanity, or Sabbath-breaking, or the like; and the opposition they openly hold to it is carried on in proportionate degrees of feebleness.

Nay, far more than all this. The very true Christians who have determined and demonstrated all these things in regard to Methodists, almost uniformly speak of them, or at least *to* them, and ostensibly appear to regard them, as Christians! They go sometimes on the Holy Sabbath day, with their wives and children, and sit and hear them perform what they call preaching.

Now, what can be more inconsistent, or more derogatory or dangerous to true religion, than this? Upon the hypothesis assumed, Methodism should be treated like any other form of infidelity: The most weighty and powerful shafts of the gospel of the grace of God should be hurled against it, because it is more specious, more powerful, and, therefore, more dangerous than other forms or organizations of irreligion.

True Christians, then, who are fully aware of all these things, and who, with apparent complaisance, shake hands with the heresy, speak of it as a *part* of the visible Christianity of the day, and make themselves sharers in the very heresy they condemn.

CHAPTER IX.

A FAINT PICTURE OF INTOLERANCE.

THE “conversion,” as it was called, of the Emperor Constantine, about three hundred years after Christ, was probably a great misfortune to Christianity; and if it is to be regarded as a misfortune, it was probably one of the greatest calamities religion has encountered. It seems to have been the inlet of exclusiveness—the opening wedge through the aperture of which has flowed all those varieties of intolerance and unholy principle which have so tarnished the history of the Church, and so damaged the religion of its members.

Religion is the principle of benevolence in essence and in activity. Any spirit *different* from this is a spirit of the world. The conversion of Constantine was a union of Church and state. The emperor took the Church into his favor and protection, and the Church took in exchange the spirit of worldly ambition, pride of opinion, desire of domination, vain speculations on mysterious doctrines, a love of rites and ceremonies, and a desire to compel submission to its opinions.

Hence errors in religion, real or supposed, were soon punished with civil disabilities. The silly mummeries of monastic superstition, and the austerities of the *Ascetics*, were soon substituted for the plain worship of God, the simple trust in Jesus Christ, and the active duties, piety and benevolence, which the Bible enjoins.

“The disciples of Christ were inspired with mutual feuds

still more implacable and destructive than the factions which were formed for or against different emperors. The spirit of contention condemned by St. Paul became almost universal. New sects sprang up incessantly, and combated each other. Each boasted its apostles, gave its sophisms for Divine oracles, pretended to be the depository of Divine faith, and used every effort to draw the multitude to its standard. The Church was filled with discord : bishops anathematized bishops ; violence was called to the aid of argument, and the folly of princes fanned the flame which spread with so destructive rage. They played the theologist, attempted to command opinions, and punished those whom they could not convince. The laws against idolaters were soon extended to heretics ; but what one emperor proscribed as heretical was to another sound doctrine.”—Milot, as quoted by Dick, (Works, vol. i., p. 129.)

Theodosius passed a law, “That all subjects shall profess the Catholic faith with regard to the articles of the Trinity ; and that they who do not conform shall ignominiously be called heretics, until they shall feel the vengeance of God and our own, according as it shall please Divine Providence to inspire us.”

This law was executed according to the true spirit and vengeance of exclusiveness in power.

In one instance, Hypatia, the daughter of Theon, a celebrated geometrician, who was a woman of great learning, unsullied virtue, and unsurpassed beauty, and was the superior of her father in philosophy—but she was a Pagan—was *suspected* of acting against St. Cyril the bishop, and thereby became an object of hatred and revenge to the *Christian* people. She was seized in the street by a set of monks, headed by a priest, hurried into the church, stripped naked, whipped, and torn literally in pieces, and her mangled body and bones were burned in the market-place.

This spirit manifested itself in good earnest in the twelfth century by the establishment of the Inquisition by Father Dominic, who was sent by Pope Innocent III. to excite the Catholic princes to the extirpation of heretics. Of all the instruments of injustice and cruelty ever invented among men, probably the Inquisition is the most diabolical, revolting, and inhuman. The history of the world does not elsewhere present such scenes of savage cruelty, refined barbarism, and inhuman tortures, falsely called punishment.

And the *crime* for which these punishments were inflicted was a *difference of opinion* from that of the dominant party.

Thousands, and tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of persons have suffered inquisitorial racks, and fires, and tortures, too hellish and revolting to be named. The victims were men, women, and children, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, high and low. The priests, and other *pious* persons, usually danced and frolicked, and sang and made merry in a high degree over the groans and shrieks of the suffering and the dying. And all this while it is beyond all question that these victims of infernal ferocity were many of them, most likely most of them, persons of substantial piety, fairly versed in the religion of the Bible.

The massacres that have taken place to cure religious opinion are horrible and almost incredible. The 24th of August, 1572, the feast of *Saint Bartholomew* was celebrated in Paris. It was devoted to the punishment of the Calvinists. By preconcert, at the tolling of the bell, the soldiers and people, under the direction of the Church, sallied forth with every kind of weapons, and entering the houses of the Calvinists, or wherever they could be found, butchered them without stint or mercy. Men, women, and children, were indiscriminately found among the butchers and the butchered. Heads and limbs, and limbless and headless bodies, were thrown in piles in the streets and gateways, and cartmen could scarcely be found in

sufficient numbers to haul the mangled bodies away and throw them into the Seine. The water of the river was discolored with blood and putrefaction for many days. The number of Calvinists thus slaughtered in and around Paris on this most disgraceful and infamous occasion amounted to but little, if any, short of *seventy thousand*.

The news of this massacre was received at Rome, by the pope and cardinals, with transports of joy; and bonfires, the firing of cannon, and other demonstrations of hilarity and triumph, crowned the occasion with infamy and savage brutality, that would or should have disgraced Diabolus in the very caverns of hell itself.

Dragooning was another mode instituted by the Church to rectify religious opinion. In the reign of Louis XIV., of France, the soldiers were made to enter the houses of Protestants, and commit every kind of injury and indignity. Furniture was broken to pieces and strewn about the houses and in the street, provisions wasted, and the dining-rooms turned into stables for the horses of the dragoons. The persons themselves were treated with every possible sort of injury and insult. Infants were torn from the breasts of their mothers and roasted before them, or they were confined a short distance asunder, where the innocent creatures would starve for their mothers' milk. Women of all ages and classes were hung up by the hair after being deprived of every fragment of clothing. They were half roasted before the fire: they were stuck all over full of pins: they were cut in all manner of ways with knives and lances: they were treated with every kind of insult and injury that the hellish fury of religious exclusiveness could invent; and men were, in like manner, beat, shot, cut, and brutalized in the most revolting and shocking manner conceivable.

The *religious wars* carried on by Louis XIII., under the direction of his pastor and spiritual governor, the Pope of

Rome, are revolting and horrifying in the extreme. To make men think right about religion, near two millions of men, women, and children lost their lives in war, or were ruthlessly butchered in cold blood. And nine cities, four hundred villages, two thousand churches, two thousand monasteries, and ten thousand houses, were destroyed. It was said of the king by his biographer, that "what gave him *the greatest pleasure* was his thought of driving heretics out of his kingdom, and thereby purging the different religions which corrupt and infect the Church of God."

The arch-hangman, Bonner, "damned to everlasting fame," whose name as a bishop disgraces the annals of the English Church, which is itself, in these days, a fouler disgrace to Christianity, was both the means and the instrument of sacrificing thousands and thousands of pious Protestants, because they did not *belong to the right Church*. With the infamous Henry, the "Defender of the Faith," and the no less infamous Elizabeth, for civil magistrates, and Bonner for bishop, the devil may well afford to hold a jubilee.

But still, we may ask, was Henry a worse man than many we meet with every day? and was Bonner more intolerant than thousands of Christians are now-a-days? Look at the circumstances surrounding the former, and the ecclesiastical power given to the latter. Do not hundreds of Christians now persecute to the extent of their means? and did Bonner do more?

Theological speculations coupled with *zeal not according to knowledge*, and both controlled by a spirit which teaches that "I am surely right, and all who differ from me are surely wrong, and ought to be set right," form the cause of religious intolerance, and are really the parents of bigotry, whether found in the hellish rites of Romanism, or the more mild but no more tolerant religious exclusiveness of our own times and country.

Falsehoods, sophisms, and mysticisms are held forth as demonstrations; and those who do not subscribe to them are ostracized. This is the bigotry of Rome, Germany, England, and the United States.

In Protestant Christianity, the inquisition, the stake, the rack, the excommunication, and the thunders of the bull, are generally found either in the written or spoken language of bigotry and intolerance, possessing less power than that of popish Europe.

How haughty and magisterial, oftentimes, is the tone of religious debate! How dogmatical and overbearing the affirmations and conclusions of many! How often is the question in controversy lost sight of, and the character of the person prosecuting or defending it substituted in lieu thereof! How often does an inquiry after truth, which only can be the character of a debate among gentlemen on any subject, degenerate into a strife between two gladiators!

A man looks upon his neighbor as a Christian—believes him to be a good man, a pious man—would revolt at the idea of such a man being lost—but, because he does not think as he does about the proper manner of sitting or kneeling at the communion table, the proper manner of baptizing, or whether God's decrees are absolute or contingent, or some other question confessedly non-essential, he must be put out of the synagogue. So far as we are concerned, and to the extent of our power, we put him out of the Church of Christ, out of the fellowship of Christians, and out of the kingdom of God.

Mr. Vaughan, in his "Defence of Calvinism," says: "The controversialist is a wrestler, and is at full liberty to do all he can, in the fair and honest exercise of his art, to supplant his antagonist. He must not only be dexterous to put in his blows forcibly, but must have a readiness to *menace with scorn* and to *tease with derision*, if haply he may by these means unnerve and unman his competitor."

Here is the *principle* of the Inquisition as full and clear as it was ever exhibited in or out of France or Italy. And the only reason why it does not extend to blood and fire, is that the arm of civil authority, which fortunately is uncontrolled by ecclesiastical frenzy, restrains it. Such sentiments and such practices are not only disgraceful personally, but they would *if they could*—perhaps not at one stride, but certainly would, if unrestrained—bring back all the horrors that ever resulted from the gloated drunkenness of Rome, or the fires of the most insane bigotry.

Woe to religion when such “wrestlers” as these become its ministers! Its beauty will be obscured, its principles will be dethroned, its benevolent spirit smothered, and its glory departed. Such angry combatants have forgotten all about religion: they forget that Christianity has a Church, and that the Church has a religion.

What a contrast to the mild and gentle spirit of religion as we see it beaming forth on the page of inspiration! See a bloated, bigoted zealot dipping his pen in gall, and laying a javelin by his side, when he sits down to defend the religion of mercy and love! See him, as he stands forth the minister of the mild and placid Jesus, foaming with rage, and hurling anathema after anathema, denunciation after denunciation, boisterous, “dexterous,” furious and overbearing, against the real or supposed supporters of some erroneous religious opinion! And then see the poor, deluded man quarrel with the Pope of Rome and his ministers for *doing the same thing*!

Are there no errors in conduct? Does all heresy relate to opinion? See the proud, boastful, bigoted Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, or Protestant Episcopalian, as he stands forth the champion of a religious opinion! Perhaps he is right in his belief of the matter in question; but in combating one error, he commits another a thousand times greater, and a thousand times more dangerous to the Church and to

religion. He demolishes, and repudiates, and scandalizes, and destroys the Church, so far as his efforts are concerned, in what he vainly considers an effort to sustain it.

And what is the cure for all this? There is a cure, and it is within the reach of good men. To say nothing of men of doubtful religion who are in ecclesiastical association with Christians, there are enough of *good men*, pious men, holy men, men who love God more than they love religious parties, and who deplore these evils and are alive to the disadvantages of them, who *can*, if they will, *cure* the evils in question.

There are men of God—true men of God—in the Presbyterian Church, in the Baptist Church, in the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the Methodist Church, and in other orthodox Churches in this country, who can correct these evils, and save the Churches this dishonor and loss.

It cannot be done in a day, but *it can be done*. If these men who fear God and love him supremely, and who prefer the prosperity of religion to all other prosperity, will determine the thing—not suffer themselves to be led away from their purpose by friend or foe, but will follow the principles of the religion of the Bible in all their writing, in all their preaching, and in all their social intercourse with Christians of all classes and all names—if these men will set their faces *against intolerance*, against *persecution*, against *exclusiveness*, against the *principles* of persecution in all its forms—if they will do this, all of this, the objectionable features in question will give way—slowly, it may be, but they will give way; and men of hot-headed religion and misguided zeal will find themselves by themselves in this unholy crusade. The thing will become unpopular: its errors will be seen: its wrong will be noted: its inability to accomplish its own purposes will be recognized; and the great evil will *abate*, and the Churches will prosper, and God will be glorified.

CHAPTER X.

“AND WE FORBADE HIM BECAUSE HE FOLLOWETH NOT
WITH US.”

THIS is the essence of Romanism. It was afterwards abundantly demonstrated and illustrated in the exclusiveness of that celebrated corruption of Christianity.

We forbade him because he followeth not *with us*. He that does not follow as we follow—he that does not do as we do—he that does not think as we think—he that does not say shibboleth as we say shibboleth—must be ostracized. This is the difficulty, and the only primary difficulty, Rome was ever in. The legitimate fruits of this claim to superior sanctity, to infallible wisdom, led Popery on to the palpable and practical corruptions which led to the Reformation. Universal primacy is but another name for the principle which forbids Christian worship where the worshippers do not *follow with us*, but act according to the dictates of their own judgment and consciences.

Rome says, “We are right, and everybody else is wrong :” common sense says, “All men are liable to error, more or less :” wisdom says, “All men are in error, more or less :” Christianity says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ;” and Jesus Christ himself says, “He that is not against us is for us.”

Protestantism espouses the cause of common sense, of wisdom, and of Jesus Christ: discovers that religion is not religion at all unless it be free, unrestrained, unfet-

tered: disbelieves in human infallibility *in toto*; and asserts the Divinely guaranteed right in every man to read the Bible for himself, to worship God for himself, and to exercise his own conscience in all matters of faith between himself and his final Judge. Rome claims infallibility for the officers of the Church, as having come down to them through a chain of successive officers. Protestantism denies infallibility to this standard—acknowledges no infallibility beyond the lips of Jesus Christ personally, except his will, which by inspiration is transferred to the pages of holy writ.

Romanism proclaims to the world, “Lo here! No Christianity out of Rome: we, and we alone, are the Church!” High-Churchism exclaims, “Lo here! No Christianity out of succession: we, and we only, are the Church!” While again we hear a shrill but feeble voice of bigotry from some few small departments of Anabaptism, crying, “Lo here! No Christianity out of the water: we, and we only, are the Church!”

And how are these discordant and conflicting claims to infallibility received by intelligent Christendom and an intelligent world? One of these voices has been sounding in our ears about twelve hundred years; another about two hundred years and upwards; and the last a much shorter time. Do they make any impression upon the surrounding Christianity of the respective ages, the tranquillity of which they disturb by the incessant din and ceaseless clamor? Not the slightest. And why? Because the express language of Jesus Christ, in reply to the very express declarations they make, is stereotyped before us in the fiftieth verse of the ninth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, “FORBID HIM NOT; for he that is not against us is for us.”

The very question now before us—ecclesiastical exclusiveness—made its appearance and underwent a discussion in the

Church many years ago; the history of which runs on this wise :

“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.”

Here the whole question of Romanism, exclusiveness, and intolerance, is formally and authoritatively settled for ever, so far as Jesus Christ's authority to settle theological and ecclesiastical questions is recognized. The question, and the only question, is, Does he cast out devils in the name of Jesus Christ? This, and this only, is the duty of Christians.

Whether men do or do not *follow with us*, in the faith and practice of Christian duty, may be a matter of considerable importance. We may be wiser, better instructed, and more free from error than they; all this is quite likely. Then, if we be convinced of this, after carefully examining the matter, without the assistance of sectarian prejudice, and in view of the settled truth that we ourselves are but fallible and liable to err, it is our duty to set on foot and keep on foot the most likely and probable means of eradicating the error.

And what instrument will be most likely to prove effectual in the subjugation of this error? The sword of excision? the shaft of persecution? To pronounce the man of honest error *out* of the Church? To blast his religious reputation? To declare that “*he is THERE, and we are HERE?*” Is this course the most probable, the most likely to cause him to lay aside the error and pursue a straighter way? If so, then proceed; if one infliction does not prove sufficient, then add, and increase, in a philosophic and sensible way. Fire and fagot are, I believe, about the last instruments generally used in such cases.

But *all* this is contrary to the Divine prescription. Jesus said unto him, *Forbid him not.*

Now, it is very clear that this man was in error. He was not "with" the apostles, where he ought to have been. Had he been there, he would have done more good : he would have worked to better advantage ; better for his own soul, better for those around. Nevertheless, he was doing good in the name of Christ : he was a Christian. Christ decided that he was a Christian, though mistaken in some things ; and the imperative command was, *Forbid him not*. The apostles were not commanded that they should not approach him in kindness, and try to convince him of his error. They were commanded not to pronounce authoritatively against him, and disown him as a Christian. It would be well if this teaching were heeded at the present day.

The principle laid down by the Saviour is, that there may be error among Christians in the Church : that Christians are fallible men ; they do not necessarily know every thing about Christianity as a system perfectly, because they are Christians ; but may pursue religious worship disadvantageously because of their defective information. But they are, nevertheless, Christians in the Church. And really there seems to be considerable common sense in this view of the subject.

Now, the good Episcopal brother who is a Churchman of high notions, sees his erring dissenter brother, and deploras his error, as all Christian men do. He desires to see him believe in the Divine right of episcopacy—in the apostolic succession : to come back and be a better Christian than he now is, that he may live better and die better. And how does he proceed to convince him of his error ? The first thing he does is to inflict upon him the severest *punishment* of which he is capable.

A question might arise here whether punishment is a very logical, or generally a very convincing argument ? But this question appears not to be thought of.

The good Baptist brother has discovered, by dint of good-

fortune, superior wisdom, or in some other way, that his Pedobaptist brother has not used water enough in his baptism; and that he is also mistaken on some legal question touching the qualifications of the minister to whose preaching he is accustomed to listen. Now these errors may be really worthy of serious notice, and ought to be cured. And how will we proceed in order in the most effectual way to cure the error? Why, an ecclesiastical error should be cured in the same way, in pursuance of the same principles, as in case of any other error. If a man be overtaken with physical infirmity—if he be sick, kill him! If he be overtaken by ecclesiastical error, kill him ecclesiastically! If he have a headache, chop his head off! To cure means to kill.

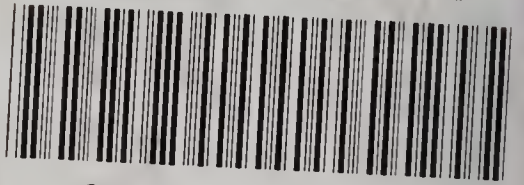
And really there is, perhaps, more logic in this, after all, than one at first might suppose. In a case of physical disease, if you kill the patient, you certainly, in the most summary and effectual way, get rid of the *disease*. And in case of ecclesiastical infirmity, if you likewise kill the subject ecclesiastically, the Church, in like manner, is rid of the infirmity. This, however, is the *argument*, the whole argument, and nothing less than the argument, upon which all ecclesiastical exclusiveness is founded.

Let the question be examined in any possible way. Subject it to the most critical and logical analysis, and it amounts precisely to this: How shall we get rid of the infirmity? Kill the subject. Gospel, guillotine, and grace, are synonymous terms. Brotherly kindness means binding to the stake. Teaching means torturing. To cut off a man's head is to convince him of the truth!

This is certainly reducing the sciences to a unit. All the means of moral suasion are centred in the inquisition, upon the same philosophic principle which centres all curative means in the halter, and all surgical instruments in the broad-axe.

THE END.

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